

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."

(Heb. 13:8)

CIRCULAR LETTER

December 1991

Heartfelt greetings to all of you in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ with the words from Psalm 139:23-24:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

In a hymn we sing: "Search me, Jesus, my light, shine through my innermost being..." [Translator note: Pfingstjubiläum hymn #199 entitled "Erforsche mich"] We are dependent on God; We are unable to do anything by ourselves. We are like sheep and cannot find the way alone. Therefore, we must faithfully follow our Good Shepherd, who gave His life for us. No one can help himself, no one can convert himself, no one can renew himself and grant regeneration, no one can sanctify himself or even baptize himself with Spirit and fire, no one can resurrect himself and transform or rapture. "... *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*" (Ephesians 2:8) Perfect redemption and full salvation come only from the Lord God. Everything, absolutely everything, comes from our Saviour Jesus Christ and is given to the redeemed. From the beginning to the end, God works everything in everyone. HE gives the will, He enables the doing, and what He begins, He also carries it out marvellously and will fulfill it on the day of the glorious return of our Lord.

Every true believer will speak to God in prayer and earnestly plead: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts."* Whoever is connected with God wants to agree with Him, to please Him, until His ways, which are higher than our ways, and His thoughts, which are higher than our thoughts, become reality in us. As God mysteriously manifested Himself in Christ, so Christ, as the hope of glory, wants to reveal Himself unto us and live His life through us. He Himself said, *"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."* (John 17:23) This is the unity which He was striving for in the high priestly prayer, specifically, the complete unity of the redeemed with their Redeemer.

Those who really want to reach the goal will also pray: *"Search me, O God, and let me know if there be any wicked way in me."*

Believers can also walk on a path that is deceptive and leads to disappointment. Many are misled by spiritual leaders who have neither experienced nor recognized the way, the truth, and the life of God. Others go their own ways without any connection to a congregation, in the firm conviction that they are right before God. Let us take a look at the religious landscape: there are so many directions, so many paths, so many personal truths. That is why constant self-examination is necessary and the Word must always be used as the standard. The Lord Himself must be our way, our truth, our life. Only then can we say: *"... and lead me in the way everlasting!"* Through the everlasting gospel we are shown the true, new and everlasting way that leads to eternal life and which the Lord has paved for us through the sacrificial offering of His body of flesh. (Hebrews 10:20)

The called out and redeemed people of Israel were on their way to the Promised Land, but at the end of their forty-year journey, God says, *"and they have not known my ways."* (Hebrews 3:10) It is possible that someone who has been a believer for many years, belongs to a congregation or thinks that they are following the Lord, and yet does not understand the ways in which God is now walking with His people. Only when the Word of God has truly become a lamp unto our feet can we walk on the path that He has prepared.

The Lord speaks through the prophet Jeremiah: *"... Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you."* (7:23) It is about the whole way, the entire Word, the whole truth, the entire life, which must be in accordance with God and the overall testimony of Scripture. Only when our own way, our own will, everything of our own, no matter how pious and well-intentioned it may be, comes to an end then does the way and life in complete obedience with God begin. Where He can do His work is when man ceases from his own works, enters into the rest of God, and is pleasing to Him. Whoever truly has a heartfelt desire to do the will of God and to be pleasing to Him, is already in His will and pleasing to Him, even if it has not yet been ful-

filled. God does everything at the appointed time and according to His plan of redemption.

In Revelation 15, the overcoming multitude from the Old and New Testaments sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb with the words: *"Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."* (vs. 3) When this scripture is fulfilled, what God has planned will be accomplished. The song of Moses, the servant of God, can be found in Exodus 15:1-19.

The song of the Lamb can already be heard in part in Revelation 5:9-13.

In the song of Moses, the great victory of God over the power of the enemy is sung in a significant way. In the 14th chapter, Moses told the people, *"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever."* (Exodus 14:13) From verse 24 we read: *"And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily..."* The whole story is familiar to most of us. The song of Moses is sung in detail in chapter 15.

The highway was intended only for the redeemed and not for the ungodly. The Bible critics who claim that this way of God led through the Sea of Reeds and was crossable by foot without the need for a miracle of God must be asked: If it had really been so, how could Pharaoh's entire army have been buried in the sea? We believe, as the Scriptures say, that the waters stood on the right and on the left like a wall, and that the Israelites passed through with dry feet without even getting their shoes wet. Whoever believes the song of Moses, along with the other passages in the Old and New Testaments, rejoices and praises the great deeds of God. HE who created the sea can divide it. HE does what He sets out to do. Glory to HIM for all eternity. At the end of this song it was exclaimed: *"Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."* (vs. 21)

The song of the Lamb is about the people of God in the New Covenant, about redemption and deliverance. It praises the Lamb of God, who

bore the sin of the world, defeated all the powers of the enemy, and gave eternal life to His own by grace. The new song touches the very core of the gospel: *"Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.."* (Revelation 5:9-10) We sing the chorus: "YOU are worthy, you are worthy..." This text is most certainly biblical, because even then John heard the song: *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."* (vs. 12)

In the 15th chapter of Revelation, we are told that the works of Almighty God are great and wonderful, and His ways are just and true. Whoever wants to rule, reign and reach the eternal goal with Him, the King of kings, must walk in His ways. HE made known His ways unto Moses and His acts unto the children of Israel [Psalm 103:7]. All those who walked on the path ordained by God in the days of the Old Testament, believed Him and obeyed Him, will join in the singing of the song of Moses, the servant of God. In the same way, all those who walked in faith and obedience in the way of God during the period of the New Testament will join in the singing of the song of the Lamb. This is the multitude of overcomers who experienced complete victory over all that was ungodly: *"And I saw ... them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God."* (Revelation 15:2) It is worthwhile to serve the Lord faithfully, to follow Him, to believe as the Scripture says, and to be obedient to His Word.

The Sign

In Revelation there is repeated mention of the last world power, which is called the beast, as well as of the image of the beast, of the mark and the number of his name. This was certainly done to inform us, upon whom the end of the world has come, so that we can discern what it is all about, make the right decision, and take the right stand before God.

However, there are denominations that consider the keeping of the Sabbath, as commanded to the people of Israel in the law, to be the sign of God and the seal of the Holy Spirit, and imply that anyone who does not keep the Sabbath has the mark of the beast. Even in circles of Bible believers there is unrest here and there about this, so a few points should be briefly noted here.

It is known from history that Sunday has been celebrated in a special way by the heathens since the days of Nimrod. His widow Semiramis, after his death, issued the proclamation that Nimrod would henceforth shine from heaven on all the inhabitants of the earth, and that this was to happen by the sun. Since then, this day has been appropriately honoured as the "Day of the Sun".

However, the day after the Sabbath, the first day of the week, also had a special meaning in biblical times. In Leviticus 23, there is reference to the observance of the Sabbath and the annual feasts. The priest was to wave the sheaf of the firstfruits *"on the morrow after the sabbath"* to make the congregation well-pleasing unto the LORD. *"And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD."* (vs. 15-16)

The day on which our Lord rose from the dead and on which His disciples gathered when He came into their midst was also the day after the Sabbath. The same thing happened a week later. (John 20:19, 26) The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost also occurred on the first day of the week. In the beginning, those who had become believers in Christ took part in both Jewish worship services and Christian meetings. (Acts 3:1; 5:20-25; 21:26; 22:17-18) Wherever possible, they preached the gospel to the Jews, who continued to gather on the Sabbath (Acts 13:14-16), just as the Lord had done before. (Luke 4:16-21)

In 321, Constantine declared Sunday a day of rest which had to be observed. With this, he allowed his hatred against the Jews, which the self-proclaimed Christian leaders from heathenism had sown in him, to break forth and thus forced them to desecrate the Sabbath and observe the Sunday. That was the truly devilish thing about this decree.

The term "day of the LORD" does not apply to the Sabbath or Sunday. In the Old and New Testaments, we are told very clearly what is meant by this. (Isaiah 13:6-9; Malachi 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10 et al.) We have also dealt with it in various places.

God goes His way with His Old Testament covenant people, and He walks His way with the congregation of the New Covenant. There is no explicit command to observe Sunday, nor is there an obligation for Christians to keep the Sabbath. It is not uncommon for worship services to take place on the Sabbath and Sunday. In early Christianity they gathered daily in the temple (Acts 2:42-47), but also met back and forth in the houses, where they broke bread and thus maintained fellowship amongst themselves. Of a meeting that took place with Paul, we are told: *"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow..."* (Acts 20:7)

The Apostle Paul addressed this issue repeatedly, as the transition from Judaism to Christianity gave rise to controversy over it. To the church in Rome he wrote: *"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind!"* (14:5) The Apostle neither pronounced a command nor a prohibition, leaving everyone free to act according to their own convictions.

Without becoming legalistic, he goes on to write: *"He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks."* One's own conviction always applies only to oneself and must not be imposed on anyone else. Incidentally, believers should also be as tolerant to respect the convictions of others as they would like to see their own respected.

The Apostle continues: *"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost...Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died! ... Hast thou faith? have it to thyself (not for the other) before God!"* (Romans 14) Whoever tries to en-

slave others through the keeping of days, eating and drinking, deprives them of personal liberty in Christ and gives himself the testimony of being enslaved. Paul did not have the **THUS SAITH THE LORD** for these insignificant trivialities, so he leaves it as a matter of personal discretion. Neither the dispute about days nor the quarrelling about food have helped a single person to this day; on the contrary: one who makes these things a hobbyhorse cannot be a blessing to anyone.

The apostles could then say: *"For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well."* (Acts 15:28-29) There is no mention here of keeping the Sabbath or of observing the Sunday, nor are there any further regulations regarding food. It has been clearly stated what needs to be observed. There is therefore not the slightest reason to go beyond the decision of the Holy Ghost imparted by the apostles, or to arbitrarily add to it.

In Colossians 2:16 the apostle writes: *"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."* It is about this nature of Christ. *"Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, e.g. 'Touch not; taste not; handle not'?"*

The Sabbath is about the temporal rest that was for God in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament about the eternal rest that is in God. Hebrews 4 also gives insight into this. *"Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, 'To day', after so long a time; as it is said, 'To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.' For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."*

The context makes it clear that a child of God having found peace with God enters into this Sabbath rest, and he who has come to rest in God also rests from his own works. This puts an end to all self-righteousness through one's own deeds. In the New Testament, true believers do not just rest before God on a 24-hour day, they rest in God every day of their lives until eternity. Amen.

The bible passage from the prophet Daniel, chapter 7:25 is misused by the people who demand that Christians keep the Sabbath. This verse, as it is written, refers to the Antichrist, and not even to his entire period of seven years, corresponding to the seventieth week of years, but only to the last three and a half years, when he will break the covenant with Israel. It therefore has nothing to do with the New Testament church and the development of church history at the time of Constantine or afterwards. The papacy has admittedly overridden the New Testament teachings of the Holy Scriptures and introduced its own dogmas and traditions.

Thus saith the LORD in the misinterpreted verse from the prophet Daniel: *"And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they (the Israelites) shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."* Immediately after that, after the last three and a half years of tribulation, as verse 26 says, judgment will be held and, as verse 27 says, the kingdom will begin with the saints of the most High. It cannot be said more clearly. The revelation given unto Daniel concerned his people Israel and the holy city of Jerusalem (chapter 9:24), not the congregation from the nations. This bible passage does not allow for any private interpretation at all.

The assertion that he who keeps Sunday and not the Sabbath automatically bears the mark of the beast, and whoever rejects Sunday and keeps the Sabbath holy, automatically bears the seal of God, has no biblical foundation. The Sabbath was to be observed by the people of Israel as a perpetual covenant (Exodus 31:12-17). The Sabbath is even a sign of the covenant between God and the people of Israel, and thus this divine order will exist once again in the millennial reign: *"And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one*

sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me,' saith the LORD." (Isaiah 66:23)

The doctrine that the sign and seal of God is the keeping of the Sabbath is completely unbiblical and leads to a false sense of security. A sign is a sign, a seal is a seal. The Sabbath remains the Sabbath. Everything remains as it originally was and as God purposed it. In the days of Noah, God made a covenant with His servant and all creation repeating several times in Genesis 9:8-17 that the rainbow would be a token of the covenant: *"This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth..."*

In the days of Moses, the blood of the Passover lamb smeared on the doorposts was the sign that the firstborn in that particular house was not to be touched. The destroyer had to spare the house for the sake of this sign. *"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."* (Exodus 12:13)

Through the prophet Isaiah, we are informed of the greatest of all signs that ever existed, the sign that was later disputed: *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."* (Isaiah 7:14)

When the scribes asked our Lord for a special sign, He said, *"A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas."* (Matthew 16:4) That is the sign of the resurrection!

In Romans 4:11, the apostle writes with reference to Abraham, who was justified by faith: *"... And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised."* Here, in connection with the sign and the seal, there is no mention at all of the Sabbath nor of Sunday. With God there are obviously neither Sabbath nor Sunday Christians; with God there are only children whom He Himself has begotten and who walk and are connected with Him daily.

The term "seal" is also used in various ways. Sealing with the Holy Spirit is the most important thing of all. But even this is independent of the observance of a day. It is a direct supernatural experience that believers have with God. *"... Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."* (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14; Ephesians 4:30 and other verses) *"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, 'The Lord knoweth them that are his'. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."* (2 Timothy 2:19)

Focus on Israel

Recently, our attention has been drawn to Israel even more than ever before. The meeting of the neighbouring Arab countries and the Israeli delegation in Madrid at the end of October 1991 set in motion a process that will culminate in a compromise. The world's demand of Israel is: "Land for peace." If Israel had land to give up, it would gladly sacrifice it for peace. However, the land is owned by others who are causing unrest in the region. In any case, Israel will make concessions, whatever they may be. As with Egypt, a consensus will be reached with Jordan and Lebanon, but the Arab world will not be satisfied with this. The atmosphere will therefore remain tense, because the war against Israel is anchored as an integral part of biblical prophecy. The starting point will be Syria, where Damascus will then be reduced to rubble and ashes. (Isaiah 17:1-3)

But it is not only about land, but also about the fact that Islam claims the eastern part of Jerusalem, where the Dome of the Rock and the El Aqsa Mosque are located. Eventually, political negotiations will lead to a hollow peace so that the whole world can exclaim, *"Peace and safety..."* (1 Thessalonians 5:3) At the very end, the Pope will also intervene and demand that Jerusalem, specifically the holy sites in East Jerusalem, be placed under international status acceptable to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Since the still blinded Jews want to obtain the political recognition of Israel by the Vatican at all costs, he will be able to make this counter-demand at the appointed time and assure

them of the construction of the Temple, and participate in its dedication. This agreement will come at the very end of the time of grace and will approximately coincide with the rapture of the Bride church.

In one of the last press releases of the Vatican, it was generally said on this subject that the Pope would only consider the recognition of the State of Israel if the negotiations that have been initiated led to success. What this success should look like is clear to everyone, namely success for the Palestinians and the entire Arab-Islamic world. According to Daniel 9:27, there will be a treaty between the Vatican and the State of Israel including the establishment of diplomatic relations. Since this treaty will be limited to seven years, it will coincide with the end of the time of grace and the beginning of the last week of years with Israel – the last seven years of this civilization. However, this covenant will be broken after three and a half years, namely, after the two witnesses have completed their ministry. The prophet Isaiah writes: *"The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man."* (33:8) Before that, reference is made to the two prophets who ask for peace and are called the valiant ones. At that time, all this will be fulfilled.

"Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness." (Isaiah 1:27)

Mission Report

By the grace of God, we can report a triumphal march for the truth. As has often been testified, the various homemade interpretations lose their appeal and all speculation ends in nothingness. The elect, however, experience a complete return to the Holy Scriptures, a total restoration of all that God gave to the New Testament church at the beginning. HE remains true to His Word and fulfills His end-time promises just as He has done throughout history.

There are always two things: one is the true revelation of the Word and the will of God in accordance with the overall testimony of Scripture, whereby God's plan of salvation appears in full light. The other are temporary phenomena, which indeed claim to be special knowledge

and revelation, but where people are led astray and in reality continue to remain in the dark. Some go from knowledge to knowledge, from revelation to revelation. The others, who do not take the Word of God as their only absolute, stumble from error to error. The powerful errors have been preached to those who have not received the love of the truth, that is, of the Word. Those who, for example, prefer quotations to the Word and fail to place them in a biblical context, have their attitudes exposed. In this case, too, it is not any claims that apply, which may be theoretical, but rather the actual reality. The fact remains that the Bride Church will be a Word-Bride born of the Spirit, just as the Bridegroom is the Word-Bridegroom.

Time is really too serious for us to take these things lightly, eternity too long for us to be lulled into a false sense of security. An examination is necessary, as we read in the word of introduction. He who is right with God and agrees with His Word will ask from the heart, "Search me, O God, and try me." The characteristic of those who find themselves in spiritual error is that they are so convinced of themselves and what they spread that they do not even think of examining it against the Word of the Holy Scriptures. In any case, the Lord now requires His own from all the shepherds who feed themselves, and takes care of His flock Himself.

This year we were not able to publish as many sermons as we have in other years. Several reprints were made, and Eastern European languages were added. We already have almost all of Brother Branham's sermons from the years 1963-1965 available in German, whereas in some other languages they are only beginning. If everyone reads the sermons that have already been published and immerses themselves in the Bible, then there is no spiritual emergency. On the contrary: In the German-speaking world, we are privileged to have such a supply of spiritual food.

Regarding the missionary journeys, we have been able to serve many again this year, especially in the countries of Eastern Europe. The spiritual hunger and desire to hear His Word is very great. Even if larger crowds come to the special meetings in the countries of Africa and Asia, it is not we who decide about it, but God, who calls the people and

draws them to Himself. In any case, this year has also brought forth fruit for eternity.

From the bottom of my heart I would like to thank all those who bear the work of God through prayer and intercession and support it with their funds. By God's grace, the building with our new printing, processing and shipping rooms will be completed in early 1992. We believe that the return of the Lord is very near, but we also believe that, as the Scriptures tell us, we are to work while it is day, for the night is coming when no one can work. (John 9:4) Precisely because time is coming to an end, we need to redeem it and do everything we can to spread the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ and proclaim the entire counsel of God worldwide.

For the year 1992, I sincerely wish everyone God's abundant blessings. May it be an extraordinary year for all of us and especially for the kingdom of God. To all the brothers who work in the different languages and countries, we wish God's special support and blessing.

By His Commission

Bro. Frank

Meeting Announcements

Salzburg: Nov. 23, 1991, 2:00 p.m., Hotel Sheraton, Auerspergstrasse
Year End Meetings with Lord's supper and Love meal

Krefeld: Dec. 28, 1991, 7:30 p.m., first meeting

Dec. 31, 1991, 7:30 p.m., last meeting

Zurich: Dec. 29, 1991, 2:00 p.m., Volkshaus, Helvetiaplatz

To all brothers and sisters participating in the meetings in Krefeld, we ask for a brief note so that we can plan accordingly.