

**Peace** be with you, listening friends. We greet you in the name of God, the Lord of peace, who wants everyone to understand and submit to the way of righteousness that He has established, and have true peace with Him forever. We are happy to be able to return today to present your program *The Way of Righteousness*.

For a long time now we have studied the first section of the Holy Scriptures. This section is called *the First Covenant*. It is also known as the *Old Testament*. This first section contains the Torah, the Psalms, and the other Writings of the Prophets. As we have seen, God used more than thirty prophets over a period of one thousand five hundred years to write the book of the First Covenant.

Today we will complete our journey in the first section of the Holy Scriptures. However, before we look at the last chapters of the book of the First Covenant, we would like to talk a little about what we have gleaned from this holy book from the first day until now. **We can summarize the message of all the prophets with three great thoughts:**

**One:** God is **holy** and must judge every sin.

**Two:** All the children of Adam are born in **sin** and must face God's judgment.

**Three:** God planned to send down a holy **Redeemer** who would bear the punishment of sin for the children of Adam.

Those are the three truths which all the prophets of God preached. Let us repeat these three points.

First: **God is holy**, and cannot overlook sin.

Second: **Man is unholy**, full of sin, and has no way of saving himself from the penalty of sin.

Third: **God has a plan** to cleanse sinners and save them from judgment.

Have you grasped these three truths? Have these truths grasped you? Do you realize how holy God is? Do you recognize how great your sins are in the eyes of the One who must judge you? Do you know that God has a plan to cleanse you from your sins?

Indeed, **God is holy** and **man is unholy**. We have seen those **two truths** often in our studies in the Holy Scriptures. The holiness of God was the reason that God created the unquenchable fire for Satan and everyone who follows him. The holiness of God was the reason that He expelled Adam and Eve from the garden of Paradise on the day that they ate of the forbidden tree. The holiness of God was the reason that God commanded the sons of Adam to sacrifice animals as a burnt offering to cover sin. His holiness was also the reason He did not accept Cain's offering. Because God is holy He destroyed sinners in Noah's time with a flood of water and rained fire in Abraham's time on the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. The holiness of God is the reason that God has prepared a day when He will judge the world in righteousness.

Listen to what God's prophets wrote about the holiness of God and the unholiness of men. They said: *"O Lord, are you not from everlasting?...Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong!" "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags!"* If God is so holy and man is so unclean, who then can be saved? How can we be saved from the eternal fire of hell? How can the children of Adam spend eternity in the presence of the God who is pure and holy?

The response to that question is the **third point** in the message of the prophets. After the prophets preached that God is **holy** and that the children of Adam are **unholy**, they went on to declare that God Himself had **a plan** to cleanse the children of Adam from their sin.

The most important message of the book of the First Covenant is that God promised to send into the world **a righteous Redeemer who would die in the place of the unrighteous children of Adam** to redeem all those who believe in Him. This was and is God's plan to save sinners. Only through the Redeemer's shed blood can God forgive sin and reconcile sinners to Himself, without compromising His holiness.

To advance His plan to send the Savior into the world, God called **Abraham** to make of him a new nation, from whom the prophets of God and the Messiah would come. God spoke to Abraham, saying: *"You will be a blessing and **all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.**"* And so Abraham begot **Isaac** in his old age, and Isaac begot **Jacob**, and Jacob begot **twelve sons** who produced the tribes of **Israel**. Thus, we learned that when God called Abraham, He was continuing forward with His plan to send the Savior into the world, because it was from the lineage of Abraham, through the nation of Israel, that the Messiah was to be born.

Next we saw how the children of Israel moved from the land of Canaan and settled in Egypt where they became slaves of the Egyptians. But God did not forget the descendants of Abraham, the Israelites. God called **Moses** to free the Israelites and lead them to the land which God had promised to their ancestor Abraham long before. God also used the prophet Moses to give us the book called **the Torah**, which is the foundation of everything that God has made known since then.

After the time of Moses, we saw how God sent many prophets to the Israelites, but most did not heed the words of the prophets. However, the unfaithfulness of the Israelites did not hinder the faithfulness of God and the plan He had designed to send the Messiah into the world! Thus we saw how God chose **David** as king of Israel and the prophet who would write most of the lovely and profound hymns found in the book of **Psalms**. The prophet David wrote much concerning the Messiah and how the

children of Adam would persecute Him and even pierce His hands and His feet. But David also prophesied that after the Messiah had shed His blood as a sacrifice that removes sin, He would conquer death and rise from the grave!

In our journey through the Scriptures, we also discovered that it was not only Moses and David who wrote about the Messiah. **All of God's prophets announced the Messiah's coming.** For example, the prophet **Isaiah** announced that the Messiah would be born in a way which, as you know, no one had ever been born. He said: *"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means, 'God with us.'"* The prophet Isaiah wrote this seven hundred years before the Messiah was born.

There was another prophet who lived at the same time as Isaiah. His name was **Micah**. God revealed to Micah the name of the town in which the Messiah would be born. Listen carefully to what the prophet Micah wrote. In the book of Micah, chapter five, we read: *"But you, **Bethlehem Ephrathah**, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times!"* Thus, Micah announced that the Messiah would be born in the town of Bethlehem, the hometown of King David! Three programs from now, we will learn how God fulfilled this prophecy, for it was in the town of Bethlehem that the Messiah was born, just as God's prophet, Micah, declared it hundreds of years beforehand.

Surely God prepared the arrival of the Savior of the world very, very carefully! God's holy Book contains **hundreds of references by the prophets about the coming of the Messiah**. Perhaps you are asking: Why did God place in the minds of the prophets all these thoughts concerning the Messiah **before** He came into the world? There is one very important reason. God inspired the prophets to write much about the Messiah

before He came, so that when He came and fulfilled all that the prophets wrote concerning Him, we might know **beyond any doubt** that He and He alone is the Savior whom God sent. God does not want anyone to deceive you! God wants you to know who the Messiah, the Savior of sinners, is, so that you can believe in Him and follow Him and be saved from your sins. That is one of the reasons He gave us this wonderful, reliable Book called the First Covenant--so we might **distinguish** the **truth** from **error**.

Now to finish our journey in the First Covenant, we would like to read from the book of **Malachi**, the final book of the First Covenant. The words of the prophet Malachi are important for us, because they are the final words which God sent down to the children of Adam before the Messiah visited the earth. Only four hundred years remained before the Redeemer would be born.

Listen to what the prophet Malachi wrote in the last chapter of the First Covenant. He said,

*"See, I will send my messenger, who will **prepare the way before me**. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty...! the Lord do not change...But for you who revere my name, **the Sun of Righteousness** will rise with healing in [his] wings!"*

Thus the prophet Malachi prophesied that God planned to send a prophet before the Messiah to prepare His way. Do you know who that prophet was? In our next lesson, we will see that the one who would prepare the way before the Messiah was the prophet **John, or Yahya** in Arabic

However, Malachi also wrote: The Lord Almighty says: *"The messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come...! the Lord do not change!"* About two hundred years earlier, the prophet Jeremiah had prophesied:

*"The time is coming when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts....I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more!'"*

With these words, God was announcing that the Messiah would bring a New Covenant which would fulfill the promises and conditions of the First Covenant. The New Covenant would not depend on man who had failed to respect God's covenant; it would depend on God who, in His faithfulness and mercy, would send forth the Messiah, the Messenger of the Covenant.

For thousands of years, God had required the sacrifice of animals so that He might forgive the sins of the children of Adam. **Animal sacrifices** were an important part of **the First Covenant** which God gave to mankind through **His prophets**. However, **the Messiah** would bring to the world **the New Covenant**, because He would **fulfil the symbolism of all the animal sacrifices**, thus setting aside the First Covenant.

The Messiah would not come to **abolish** the words of the prophets, but to **fulfil** them. That is why the prophet Malachi calls the Messiah **"the Sun of Righteousness."** How would the Messiah be like the sun? The prophets were like the moon or a candle which diffuses a little light in a dark world. However, the Messiah is the rising sun, because He came to drive out the darkness of our sin and set us on **the way of righteousness forever!** Who needs the light of the moon or a candle once the sun has arisen? The Messiah is **the Sun of Righteousness!** In our next lesson, we will hear that Zechariah, the father of the prophet John, spoke of the Messiah in a similar way, saying: *"Because*

*of the tender mercy of our God...the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." Amen!*

And so, we have come to the end of our journey in the books of the First Covenant.

Next time, God willing, we will begin the wonderful section, which follows, that is, the New Covenant--the book of the Gospel or *Injil*. It is in the Gospel that we discover how the Messiah fulfilled the words of the prophets...God bless you as you heed this warning:

***"We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts!"***

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