

**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*.

Last time, we finished our journey through the first section of the Holy Scriptures, the section that contains the Torah, or *Taurat in Arabic*, the Psalms or *Zabur* and the Writings of the Prophets. That first section is called **the First Covenant**, also known as *the Old Testament*. Today we will begin our study of the second section of the Word of God, called *the New Testament, or the New Covenant*.

**Why did God separate His holy Book into two sections**, a First Covenant and a New Covenant? God had many reasons for doing this. Perhaps the first thing we need to understand is that all the words in the **First Covenant** were written **before the Messiah was born**, while the words of the **New Covenant** were written **after the Messiah was born**. Thus, the message of God's prophets in the First Covenant was: "God **will send** the Messiah!" But the message of the New Covenant is: "God **has sent** the Messiah, just as He promised through His prophets in the First Covenant!"

Is this important difference between the First Covenant and the New Covenant clear in your mind? Some people criticize the Holy Scriptures because it has an *Old Testament* and a *New Testament*. They think that *New Testament* means that someone has attempted to nullify and replace the original Writings of the Prophets with another book! But that is not the way it is. The New Testament, that is, the New Covenant, **does not nullify** what the prophets wrote in the First Covenant-- it **confirms** what the prophets wrote! The New Covenant shows how God fulfilled the promises and prophecies and symbols of the First Covenant. In the First Covenant, all the prophets were announcing: "The Messiah **will come! He will come! He will come!**"

But the message of the book of the New Covenant is: "The Messiah **has** come! **The Messiah, of whom all the prophets spoke and wrote, has come! He has come!**"

Yes, we should **thank God** with a joyful heart that the Holy Scriptures contain a First Covenant **and** a New Covenant. Because in those two sections, we can see that what God promised so long ago--He has accomplished! God has sent us a Savior, **just as He promised our ancestors in the Torah, the Psalms and the other books of the prophets**. As the seed of the baobab grows up into a mighty baobab tree, in a similar way the First Covenant comes to maturity in the New Covenant.

As you may know, the second section of the Holy Scriptures, **the New Covenant**, has another name. That name is the "**Injil**." *Injil* is an Arabic word that means *the Good News* {the Gospel}. Truly, the message of the book of the Gospel is **extremely good news**, because it tells how the Messiah accomplished what the prophets had announced, thus opening for the children of Adam a door of peace with God forever!

Concerning the Book of the Gospel you need to understand that the Messiah Himself did not write it. Just as God used many men to write the book of the First Covenant, so He used many men to write the book of the New Covenant. God used **four men** to write the story of the Messiah who came to earth. Those four men were named *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*. **Why did God inspire four people to write the story of the Messiah?** Why did He not just use one person to write the book of the Gospel? Here is the reason: God wanted to communicate to us a message which would be beyond doubt and worthy of full confidence. He used four writers in order **to confirm His word**. Just as a table with four legs is more stable than a table with one leg, so four witnesses are more reliable than a single witness. God employed four witnesses, so that we might know that everything written in the Book of the Gospel concerning the Messiah is absolutely true! Just as God placed His words in the minds of the prophets,

so God guided four men who lived in the same era as the Messiah to write what they had seen and heard concerning the Savior of the world. Here's an interesting fact: Actually, God inspired *eight men* to write about the Messiah. The letters of the apostles Paul, Peter, James and Jude are also part of the *Injil*--the Gospel Writings--and everything they wrote is in perfect and glorious harmony!

Do you know in which language Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote the holy book of the Gospel? They wrote it in the Greek language. However, most of us do not understand Greek, we will be reading it in English. We thank God that He put it into the hearts of scholars to translate the Gospel from Greek into English as well as some two thousand other languages from around the world

Yes, sometimes we hear those who try to fight against the book of the Gospel, saying, "No one can trust it. It has been tampered with! It contains errors and contradictions!" Friends, the one who fights with the holy Gospel is fighting with God Himself. Like the African proverb says: "An egg should not wrestle with a rock!". The Holy Scriptures are worthy of our full confidence and obedience. Just as the Word of God is perfect in the Torah and the Psalms, so it is also perfect in the Gospel. The Holy Scriptures cannot be broken. God is great and is able to protect His Eternal Word! He has preserved His Truth for all those who seek after it with all their heart. No one can ever alter the living and enduring Word of God! That is what the Lord Himself declares in the Gospel when He says: *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away!"*

Now then, the moment for us to **begin our journey through the book of the Gospel**, the New Covenant, has arrived. In our last program, we read about the prophet Malachi who lived four hundred years before the Messiah. During those four hundred years following the time of Malachi, God did not send to the Jews any more prophets to write the Word of God. Why did God not send any more prophets? He sent no more prophets

because the book of the First Covenant was complete. **God had said everything He wanted to say through the prophets.** Now God was waiting for the appointed hour when He would bring the Messiah into the world so that He might establish the New Covenant.

We have already read what the prophets Isaiah and Malachi foretold concerning God's plan to send a prophet before the Messiah to prepare the way before Him. Do you know which prophet that was? Yes, it was the prophet John, or *Yahya* in Arabic. John's father was Zechariah – or *Zakaria*. Zechariah was a priest who served God and the people by offering animal sacrifices on the alter of the temple in Jerusalem.

Let us now open the holy Gospel, the *Injil*, and hear what Luke wrote concerning the prophet John's birth. Reading in chapter one, the Scripture says:

*In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named **Zechariah**, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife **Elizabeth** was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well on in years.*

*Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God... And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. **Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.** When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from*

*birth. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well on in years." The angel answered, "I am **Gabriel**. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. **And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time.**"*

*Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak. When his time of service was completed, he returned home. After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant... "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."*

We see how God sent the angel Gabriel to Zechariah to announce to him how Elizabeth his wife would have a son. This son would become a great prophet who would prepare the way before the Messiah. Thus in the end of the chapter, the Scripture says:

*When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called **John**." They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name." Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His*

*name is John." Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.*

*His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because **he has come and has redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David**<sup>70</sup> **as he said through his holy prophets of long ago**, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us- to show mercy to our fathers and **to remember his holy covenant**,<sup>73</sup> **the oath he swore to our father Abraham**: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."*

*After Zechariah had said this, he turned toward John, the baby, and said, "And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; **for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him**, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which **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.**"*

Thus did Zechariah praise God following the birth of John because he knew that **the time for the Messiah to be born had arrived!** John, the son of Zechariah, was not the Messiah, but the one who would come before the Messiah, in order **to announce the Messiah's arrival** and prepare the way before Him.

Thank you for listening. Please remember to tune in next time as we read the story about how God sent His angel Gabriel to a virgin by the name of Mary to announce to

her a very important message. The next lesson is loaded with valuable truth. Don't miss it!...

God bless you as you meditate on these words of Zechariah:

*"Praise be to the Lord!...He has raised up [a mighty Savior] for us in the house of His servant David, as he said through his holy prophets of long ago!"*

If you would like more information about *The Way of Righteousness*, please visit the website: [TWOR.com](http://TWOR.com) That website again is: [TWOR.com](http://TWOR.com)