

Peace be with you. 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*.

As most of you know, right now, in our journey through the Holy Scriptures, we are looking into the book of the Gospel, which relates the Good News about Jesus the Messiah. He is the Savior who visited the world to free the children of Adam from the dominion of Satan, sin and eternal judgment.

In the past few programs, we have seen how Jesus traveled throughout the land of the Jews, **teaching** the multitudes, and **healing** their sick. Thus, a great crowd followed Him. However, most of **the religious rulers were jealous of Him**, because they could not refute the wisdom with which He spoke, nor could they deny the wonders He performed.

Today we will continue in the Gospel and see how **the Lord Jesus was confronted by the religious rulers regarding the day of rest, also known as the Sabbath**. The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week, the day which God gave the Jews as a day of rest, after they had worked six days. However, the religious rulers of that time, the Pharisees, accused Jesus of violating the Sabbath because He did good works on the Sabbath. They were using this as a pretext to discredit Him, because they could not find anything bad of which to accuse Him.

Let us listen to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter twelve. The Scripture says:

*At that time Jesus went through the grain fields **on the Sabbath**. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the*

*Sabbath." He answered, "Haven't you read what [the prophet], David, did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? I tell you that **one greater than the temple is here.** If you had known what these words mean, '**I desire mercy, not sacrifice,**' you would not have condemned the innocent. For **the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.**"*

Jesus has hundreds of names and titles in the Holy Scriptures. One of those titles by which He often called Himself is "**the Son of Man.**" This title, the Son of Man, reminds us that the Messiah humbled Himself to take on the form of a son of Adam. It also reveals His glory, because this One, who humbled Himself by becoming a man, is the same One who possesses all authority and all judgment over all the children of Adam. Think of it! The Word and Spirit and power and glory of God--came to earth and took on a human body! Yes, Jesus Christ is the Son of Man, the Lord of the Sabbath and the Lord over all. However, the Pharisees did not accept Jesus for who He really was.

Let us hear what happened next. The Scripture says:

*Going on from that place, [Jesus] went into their synagogue, and **a man with a shriveled hand** was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! **Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**" Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed him, and he healed all their sick...*

We see how the Pharisees accused Jesus of wrongdoing because He did not respect their traditions. What hypocrisy! These religious rulers had no compassion for the hungry or for the sick, yet they wanted to make people believe that their traditions, which prohibited good works on the Sabbath, came from God! However, Jesus, who knew their evil hearts, reminded them of what God declared in the Scriptures, saying, *"If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."*

Reading on, the Scripture says:

*Then they brought him a **demon-possessed man** who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons." Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by [Satan], by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*

Sometime later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie: the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. And they waited for the moving of the waters. From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease he had.

*One who was there had been **an invalid** for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.*

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?" The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

*Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." **For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.***

Let us pause here. Why did the religious rulers harass Jesus and seek to kill Him? Was it because Jesus healed the invalid on the Sabbath? That was not the real reason. They were seeking to kill Jesus because **He said that God was His Father**. They could not accept that Jesus was the Messiah, who came from the presence of God. Thus they accused Jesus of blasphemy, they accused him of *insulting God*, and sought to destroy Him.

But the Scripture says:

*Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, **the Son** can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.*

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

*"If I **testify** about myself, my testimony is not valid. There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid. "You have sent to **John** and he has testified to the truth. Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. I have testimony weightier than that of John. For **the very work** that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. And **the Father** who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are **the Scriptures** that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. I do not accept praise from men, but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept*

him. How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?

*"But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed **Moses**, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"*

Did you hear how the Lord Jesus reproved the Pharisees who wanted to kill Him? He told them that **whoever rejects the Messiah** whom God sent from heaven **is rejecting** the testimony of the Messiah's incomparable **words** and **works**; he is rejecting the testimony of the prophet **John**, the testimony of the prophet **Moses** and the testimony of the **Scriptures**. In short, whoever rejects the Messiah is rejecting **God Himself**. He who dishonors the Son is dishonoring the Father who sent Him. To refuse the word and authority of Jesus is to refuse the word and authority of God--for Jesus is the very Word of God and the Person to whom God has entrusted all judgment and authority.

Whoever truly believes God and His prophets will also believe that Jesus is the Messiah who came from heaven, because all of God's prophets testified of Him. Those who know and believe the Writings of the prophets also know and believe that Jesus, the son of Mary, is the One whom God has chosen to be the Savior of the world. That was what Jesus told the religious rulers when He said,

*You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. **These are the Scriptures that testify about me**, yet you refuse to come to me to have life...do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is [the prophet] **Moses**, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed **Moses**, you would believe me, for*

*he wrote about me. **But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?***"

Oh that each of us might carefully consider these words, because God wants to give us insight into their full meaning. God wants the truth to be in our hearts. **If we say that we believe the prophets, then we must believe the One of whom they testified**, that is, **Jesus the Messiah!** Friends, we leave you with this question: Do you **really** believe the prophets? There was more than one prophet. Many are quick to believe the testimony of one man, but, strangely, few believe **the confirmed testimony of God's many prophets** who wrote the Holy Scriptures. How about you? *"Do you believe the prophets?"*

This is where we must end today because our time is up. Please join us the next time as we continue in the wonderful story of Jesus the Messiah....

May God bless you and speak to you as you consider what the Lord Jesus told the Pharisees:

"Since you do not believe what [the prophet Moses] wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"