

**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*.

In our journey through the Holy Scriptures, we have heard how God's prophets announced **the plan of salvation** that God designed to save sinners from eternal punishment. What is that plan of salvation? It is the death of the Messiah on the cross. God's prophets testified that the righteous Messiah must die, shedding His blood for the unrighteous, bearing for us the punishment for our sins, like an innocent sacrificial sheep. This was the only way that God could forgive us of our sins and judge us as righteous without compromising His righteousness. In our chronological study of the Holy Scriptures we are nearing the most important story of all, that is, the historical account of the death and resurrection of the Messiah. In the will of God, today, and in the coming lessons, we will see how the Messiah, Jesus, offered His life to bear the sins of the world.

In our last lesson, we saw how the chief priests bribed a betrayer who led them to the place where Jesus and His disciples were. We saw how they **arrested Jesus**, bound Him, and led Him away. **Amazing!** Why did Jesus, who was full of the power of God, allow His enemies to capture Him? He allowed them to capture Him so that He might **fulfil the Scriptures of the Prophets** which foretold how the Messiah must suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day, so that whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins. Just as the prophets had prophesied, the Messiah would be *"led like a lamb to the slaughter."*

Now let us continue in the Gospel to see what happened on **that dark night**, after the religious rulers arrested Jesus. The Scripture says:

**They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law came together.** Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for **evidence against Jesus** so that they could put him to death, but **they did not find any**. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this manmade temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'" Yet even then their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" **"I am,"** said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" **They all condemned him as worthy of death.** Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.

While **Peter** was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said. But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entrance. When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." Again he denied it. After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about." Immediately the cock crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him:

*"Before the cock crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.*

*Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death. They bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor. When **Judas**, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.*

*[Thus,] **the Jews led Jesus** from Caiaphas (the High Priest) **to the palace of the Roman governor**. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. So **Pilate** came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?" "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you." Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." "But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected. This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled.*

*Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I*

came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." "What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, **"I find no basis for a charge against him."** But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here." On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

When **Herod** saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies.

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found **no basis for your charges against him**. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death." "It is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?"<sup>40</sup> They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us **Barabbas!**" (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. But they kept shouting, **"Crucify him! Crucify him!"** For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him."

*Then Pilate took Jesus and had him **flogged**. The soldiers twisted together a **crown of thorns** and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they **struck him in the face**. [They **spat on him**, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "**Crucify! Crucify!**" But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him." The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law **he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.**"*

*When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. "**Where do you come from?**" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."*

*When Pilate [heard this and] saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" **Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them...and handed [Jesus] over to be crucified.***

In this way, everything took place just as the prophet Isaiah had prophesied some seven hundred years earlier, when he wrote concerning the Messiah: *"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."* Isaiah also penned these words of the Messiah, *"I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting."*

Today we have seen how the religious leaders of the Jews fulfilled the Writings of the Prophets when they oppressed and afflicted the holy and righteous Messiah and condemned Him to death. Why did the religious rulers condemn the Messiah to death? They condemned Him because **they could not tolerate the light of the truth**. Jesus had told them the truth, and that truth revealed their hypocrisy and wickedness. Jesus Himself was the Truth! The Light had come into the world, but people preferred the darkness because of their evil deeds. And since the children of Adam could not tolerate the Light, their only solution was to attempt to extinguish it. That is what the Scriptures declare, saying:

*"The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it...None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory...He (the Lord Jesus Christ) was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. **Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.**"*

Thank you for listening. Be sure to join us for the next program when we see how the children of Adam fulfilled the words which the prophet David wrote in the Psalms concerning the Messiah, saying: *"They have pierced my hands and my feet."*

God bless you as you think about what the prophet Isaiah prophesied long beforehand concerning the sufferings of the Messiah:

*"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."*