

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 previous lesson, we heard about how the Jewish religious rulers arrested Jesus, led Him away to the house of the High Priest during the night, **tried Him** with false witnesses, **condemned Him**, and took Him to Pilate, the governor of the land, so that they might crucify Him. The soldiers viciously flogged Jesus, then twisted together a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, mocking Him, striking Him on the face, spitting on Him, taking a rod and striking Him on the head. **In this way, the children of Adam disowned the Righteous One, the Lord of Glory, who came from heaven.** The people who tortured Jesus did not know the words of the prophets; nevertheless they were fulfilling the words of the prophets which announced that the Messiah must suffer in this way at the hands of sinners.

Today we will continue in the book of the Gospel - or *Injil* - to see how **Jesus the Messiah suffered and died** on the cross, **thus fulfilling God's great plan of salvation** which His prophets announced long beforehand. Before we begin today's study, it is important to know that when Jesus lived on earth, the Roman government would execute certain criminals by nailing them to poles, or trees or specially made crosses. Such a death is called *crucifixion*. This excruciatingly painful and shameful death was reserved for the worst criminals.

Perhaps some of you are wondering why God ordained that the righteous Messiah should die such a painful and shameful death. The reason Jesus had to die such a horrible death is because sin is such a horrible crime. **Sin is the problem of the world.** We are all sinners and our sin is an offense to a holy and righteous God! If God is going

to forgive you and me of our sins without compromising His righteousness, then **God must judge our sins with a just and complete judgment**. He cannot forgive our sins in just any sort of way. God is a righteous Judge and must properly punish **every** sin. The penalty for sin is death and the eternal fires of hell. This penalty must be paid **in full**. The Good News is that God has sent us a righteous Redeemer to pay the full penalty of our sins. Jesus is that righteous and mighty Redeemer. He came to save us from God's wrath which should fall on us because of our sins.

Now let us listen with our minds and hearts as we read from the Gospel **the sacred story of Jesus and His death on the cross**. The Scripture says:

Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).

*As they [were leading Jesus], they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and waited for him... Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals-one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing!**"... The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."*

Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The

chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews', but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews." Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the [word which the prophet David wrote in the Psalms] **might be fulfilled** which said, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." So this is what the soldiers did.

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "**I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.**"

At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "**Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?**" --which means, "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**" When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." [Another said,] "Leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said. (The people said that because they did not understand what Jesus had said, nor did they understand what was happening. The whole land became completely dark--from midday until early afternoon. During those dark hours **God heaped the punishment of the sins of all the children of Adam upon the holy Redeemer**, so that whoever believes in Him will never perish! We cannot even begin to imagine the intensity of Jesus' sufferings for us.)

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled, Jesus said, **"I am thirsty."** A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, **"It is finished!"** [Then] Jesus called out with a loud voice, **"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"** When he had said this, he breathed his last.

The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, **"Surely this man was the Son of God!"** Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath.

Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, **one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.** The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened **so that the scripture would be fulfilled:** "Not one of his bones will be broken," and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

Later, **Joseph [a rich man from] Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus.** Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's

permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was near by, they laid Jesus there."

This is where we must end our reading today, although the story of the Messiah does not end with the tomb! How glad we are that we can invite you to join us in the next study called: "**Jesus is risen!**"

What we have heard today is truly astounding! We have seen how the children of Adam despised the Messiah, the Lord of Life, and killed Him by nailing Him to a cross. However, what we must remember is that the death of the Messiah was the fulfillment of the plan of salvation which God designed before the world existed.

Did you hear what the Lord Jesus announced from the cross just before He died? He said, "**It is finished!**" Why did Jesus say, "*It is finished!*"? He said, "*It is finished!*" because He had completed the work of salvation. Surely, the religions of the world do **not** say, "It is finished!" What they say is: "Nothing is finished! You must save yourself by your own good deeds! You must work to erase your own sins! Come on, get with it! Keep working! Nothing is finished! If you want to enter Paradise you must work, offer sacrifices, fulfil your religious duties, pray, fast, treat your body harshly, etcetera, etcetera!" That is the message of religion!

But God's Good News to man is: "*It--is--finished!!!*" Believe and be saved! The Messiah has paid your debt of sin with His own blood! The blood of Jesus can cleanse and

change the worst of sinners! That is the reason Jesus could say to the dying, repentant criminal, *"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."*

The work that can save you from sin's penalty is completely done. God is satisfied with Jesus' sacrifice. We no longer need to offer sacrifices of sheep as did our ancestors who lived before the time of the Messiah. Jesus Christ is God's perfect and final Sacrifice! Nothing remains for us, except to believe what God has testified concerning the Messiah and His sacrifice. *"It is finished!"* Jesus has fulfilled that which the prophets foretold about the sufferings and death of the righteous Redeemer! Seven hundred years before Jesus came into the world, the prophet Isaiah wrote:

*"[The Messiah] was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth...**But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all!"***

Do you really believe the prophets? Do you believe that Jesus is the One who finished the work of Salvation of which God's prophets wrote? Do you now understand the reason for the death of the righteous Redeemer on the cross? **You and I** are the reason! It is because of **our sins** that He died, like a spotless sacrificial sheep. We deserve eternal punishment in hell, but God, out of His great love for us, sent Jesus (whom He calls His beloved Son) so that He might suffer our punishment and bear the penalty for our sins. That is what the Holy Scriptures declare, when they say:

*"Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. **But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we***

were still sinners, Christ died for us!" "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Glory to God, the Merciful, the Compassionate... ***"It is finished!"*** God has fulfilled the symbolism of Abraham's Sacrifice {*Id al-Adha*}! For in the same place where Abraham sacrificed the innocent ram in his son's place, Jesus, the sinless Redeemer, allowed Himself to be sacrificed in our place -- ***"that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life!"***

Thank you for listening. If you have any questions concerning this perfect sacrifice, which the Lord Jesus made for you, please write to us. You may email resources@rockintl.org.

God bless you as you think about the deep and powerful words, which Jesus announced from the cross just before He died. He said,

"It is finished!"