

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Lesson 78, Chapter 23 Conclusion

As we inch closer and closer to Yeshua's death on the cross in Matthew's Gospel, there's so much context and background and many subjects that we encounter that are in need of explanation and fleshing out that at times we're going to need to pause to confront them (although, I pray it will be an interesting and spiritually profitable pause). So, let's go where angels fear to tread to open today's lesson.

There is precious little teaching in the modern Church on the subject of Hell (probably because there is also precious little teaching on the subject of sin), even though finding considerable tradition-based reading material on the matter isn't difficult. The reality is that particularly in the West the ideas of being told we're wrong about much of anything, or that we are accountable and have real consequences for our actions, are simply not liked. Much has been done by governments as well as by the institutional Church to sort of dance around personal accountability in order to appeal to a broader public; whether that accountability is to a particular society or to God. As Ben Witherington III put it in his commentary on Matthew chapter 23:

"We want no-fault relationships: no-fault divorce, no-fault auto accidents, nolo contendere legal verdicts, and the like. No wonder we do not want to talk about some people going to Hell forever."

Nolo contendere means a plea by which a defendant in a criminal prosecution accepts a conviction as though they had pled guilty, but they do not admit their guilt. In the American court system the defendant is hoping that they will have a personal conversation with the Judge to explain their side of the story that of

course has what, in the defendant's views, are mitigating circumstances that dilutes their responsibility for their illegal behavior. Thus behaviors that are knowingly wrong or against the law might become less illegal due to circumstances; or maybe a sympathetic Judge will render a merciful and lesser sentence or even suspend the sentence altogether.

When I was in the military there was a kind of *nolo contendere* argument that was commonly used (and joked about) when we had to stand before our superior to explain our actions that were most definitely against the orders we had been given: "Guilty with an excuse, sir". The hope was the same: guilt but little or no accountability, or perhaps less severe consequences for it

The questions that all those who seek God, and especially Believers, must ask are: will we really be held accountable for our sins now that Jesus has come? And if so, does that accountability include the possibility of Hell? Which leads to, does Hell even exist? Is there really a place where our accountability to God can involve a consequence for our actions that is beyond terrible and painful, and is also without end? Two well known former mega-church pastors Rob Bell and Carlton Pearson say "no" there isn't; they say a loving God like Jesus wouldn't do such a thing. I have had this same notion confidently and directly expressed to me on more than one occasion by Christians who have lost family members that had never expressed belief in Christ, and by others that use the concept of Hell as but another reason to avoid any relationship with Jesus.

I bring this up because, first, Hell is a vitally important subject that we need to face. And second because of how we ended our previous lesson. In Matthew 23 verse 33, as Yeshua was condemning some of the Pharisee Synagogue leadership, we read:

^{CJB} **Matthew 23:33** *"You snakes! Sons of snakes! How can you escape being condemned to Gei-Hinnom?"*

It is close to a consensus among Christian scholars (and I share their view) that this statement by Christ was a kind of rhetorical question that is more a statement. That is, Yeshua is not asking them if there might be a way for them to escape the divine judgment of Gei-Hinnom (Gehenna). Rather He is saying in a rather mocking way that they have already been judged; their eternal damnation is certain. They are not redeemable. While being "not redeemable" is itself a huge subject with much disagreement and high emotion involved, I don't want to

bog us down with that today except to say this: I am personally convinced by what the Bible tells us that before we are born, God knows who shall and shall not (by our own free-will choice) accept a redemptive trust in Him. So it's not as though before we're born God creates some babies to enter into this world that He has willed in advance to have no hope of redemption in their lives. Rather, it is a foreknowledge of whom will accept the gift of salvation that is freely offered, and therefore whom will not.

One may ask, then, if He has this foreknowledge why allow these who will destine themselves for Hell and eternal damnation to ever enter this world in the first place? Wouldn't it be better for the person never to be born, never to attain a consciousness of their own existence, than to have to suffer eternal punishment? The best answer I can give you is that even the determined and permanent unrighteous can have a pretty good life on earth; they can have good fortune, perhaps become fabulously wealthy, enjoy the best material and pleasurable things this world has to offer, and die relatively peacefully after a full life span. We also know from the Scriptures that God has always used some of the permanently unrighteous and wicked for His purposes. Sometimes that purpose is to test His chosen; sometimes it is to punish His chosen (as with the exiles of Israel); sometimes it is to benefit His chosen in some improbable way. But the truth is that most of the time, from the human and earthly perspective, it is hard to find much rationale behind God allowing the wicked to live let alone thrive, and therefore I lump all those instances together and see them as divine mystery that I choose not to waste my time ruminating over.

It seems that these particular Pharisees Yeshua is chastising so severely in Matthew 23 are among those determined to never trust in Him, and therefore they have destined themselves for Gei-Hinnom. In other words, while the final judgment is an End Times event that will happen at a later time, in an entirely different venue (with Jesus as the Official Judge), the verdict that comes later is already known. Christ's hope for expressing it now is that the listening crowds will be shocked enough to seriously re-examine their own earthly lives and spiritual beliefs, realize their sinful condition, repent in the Name of Yeshua, and be Saved.

So, was Christ actually talking about Hell? Or was He merely using the Hebrew word for Hell (Gei-Hinnom)? Or was it only a Jewish expression that was meant to tell someone just how bad they were (as far this particular person was concerned), but it had no spiritual or eternal overtones built into it? The best way

we can examine this is to explore just how this concept of a place of the wicked dead who would suffer, began. And although we find such a concept in many ancient cultures, we'll only deal with it as concerns the Hebrews, the Bible, and Christianity.

The Christian concept of Hell as we know it today developed over many centuries, and it began well after the Bible (Old and New Testaments) were created and closed up. Early in the Old Testament we read of something called ***Sheol***, which we can best be described as the grave or the place of the dead. It is not a well fleshed out concept in the Bible. Yet, because we regularly read in the Bible of terms about death like "so and so went to be with their fathers", what we are actually reading about is remnants of pagan ancestor worship that remained as part of early Hebrew thoughts about death and the afterlife. Thus among some Hebrews there was a belief that departed souls took on some kind of shadowy existence in an afterlife, residing in some kind of underground world of disembodied souls. The Bible is very hazy, and has little to say, about death and afterlife especially in the Old Testament. Death was terrible and feared, and what happens afterward was a total mystery... which is what made it all the more scary. The New Testament offers us more information that actually brings hope, telling us that (at least in the present age) a righteous person has nothing to fear from death. A Believer that dies goes immediately to be with the Lord in Heaven.

We also learn of a place called Abraham's Bosom. This was a real place where, prior to Yeshua's death and resurrection, the souls of the righteous dead were held captive in a pleasant and safe place. It was essentially a waiting room. What was the wait about? First, Abraham's Bosom is not the equivalent of the Catholic Purgatory. Although the Catholic theological conception of Purgatory is at least partly based upon Abraham's Bosom, the Catholic version is born out of its very name. Purgatory comes from the Latin ***purage***, which means "to purge". Thus the doctrine is that those who die in a state of grace (as determined by the Church) go to a sort of middle stopping point and waiting area called Purgatory in order to be purged of their sins so as to be made ready for Heaven. The process is of an undetermined length of time, and some may never succeed in being made ready-enough for a variety of reasons, sometimes including actions (or inactions) of their living family members.

So along with the concept of Abraham's Bosom came its opposite... the Place of Torments (one recalls the story of the rich man and the poor beggar Lazarus).

Abraham's Bosom contained righteous souls waiting in a pleasant and never-needful place for Messiah to come and pay the price for their sins, while the Place of Torments contained wicked souls waiting in a dry, ever-needful unpleasant place for their final judgment.

Centuries later the idea of what happens to the righteous dead was still mostly unchanged, but a newer term for the condition or destiny of the unrighteous dead became Gei-Hinnom. Gei-Hinnom simply means the Valley of Hinnom. It is essentially a long canyon that runs alongside one edge of the city of Jerusalem, and part of it came to be used as a dump site for the constantly over-crowded Jerusalem and its nearby suburbs. Everything that was waste was thrown there. While we tend to think of a garbage dump more in terms of paper and plastics and cloth and unused food, that is not what it was like in the 1st century. The waste thrown into Gei-Hinnom came from the hundreds of animals sacrificed daily at the Temple along with the waste parts of animals used for food by the general population. Body parts were known to be disposed of there (amputations both accidental and on-purpose occurred in Bible times just as they do now). Debris of wood items, filthy rags (they had no toilet paper in those days), and other things more disgusting than I want to talk about also were deposited there. So to deal with the ever increasing volume of trash, the obvious solution was to burn it. Therefore fires were kept burning 24/7 to reduce the garbage to ashes. However the nauseating odors created were so bad that sulfur was also thrown onto the burning garbage as the only known means at that time to mask those otherwise unbearable odors.

Thus the worst thing that could be imagined for a dead person would be to have their body thrown into the Jerusalem municipal trash dump and be burned up. Not that this necessarily happened (I've not read of any evidence of it happening). It also gained a symbolic meaning of the souls of the wicked dead being punished by being utterly destroyed by fire. I've taught you in the past that in the Bible fire is used for 2 things: the first is to purge something in order to bring out purity, or second to totally and utterly destroy it. Gei-Hinnom was symbolic of the second of these 2 uses of fire. We really don't find much biblical advancement of the concept of Gei-Hinnom as a place of annihilation as a horrible punishment for the unrighteous dead. However, emergent gentile Christianity took it from there.

The first advancement was that of Greek speakers who mixed together the Greek religious concept of Hades with Hebrew Gei-Hinnom. Hades had long been part

of Greek mythology but it played no role in the Hebrew faith. Thus we will find that because of the Greek language used to record the Gospel accounts, when in Matthew 16:18 we hear of Jesus saying **"*thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*"**, there is absolutely no conceivable way that Yeshua ever would have used the word "Hell" or would He have said "Hades". He would only have thought of **She'ol** or perhaps Gei-Hinnom. Yet, the early Greek/Roman gentile Church latched onto this Greek/gentile insertion of the word "Hades" to depict Christ's words as indicating something that more or less validated the Greek mythology of their underworld for the dead. By the 5th century the doctrine of Hades being a place for wicked souls that suffered in some not well-defined way had become well established throughout the Church. Medieval concepts of Hades, however, progressed to provide more horrifying details: pits full of dark flames, terrible cries of anguish, gagging stench, and lakes of boiling hot water filled with serpent-like monsters.

Eventually in the 14th century an Italian poet named Dante wrote the "Divine Comedy". In it the concept of Hades advanced yet again with the idea that one had various levels of punishment inflicted upon them in proportion to their sins. Therefore gluttonous people lay in heaps of putrefied garbage. Murderers flail around in boiling rivers of blood, filled with horrifying creatures. Part of Dante's work included what is known as Dante's Inferno; it is about an imagined journey through Hell in order for a soul to be purified sufficiently to finally go to Heaven. Naturally, Catholic Purgatory played a pivotal role in his story.

Finally in the late 15th century, an Italian artist named Botticelli painted what is best known as Dante's Inferno. It was his immensely creative vision of what he thought Dante was describing. The painting of fire and tormented souls and multiple levels of punishment and purification through which a soul tried to move... with Hell shaped like a funnel... has become the foundation for not just Catholicism but almost all other branches of Christianity. As the years went on, the thoughts of Hell became less complicated and more was stressed fire and the agony of being constantly burned. These thoughts formed most of the Church doctrines about Hell, and generally speaking remains so to this day. So, we have to be rather careful when we speak of Hell, or think of Hell, because without doubt the Bible speaks of a Place of Torments and a Lake of Fire and so on; however the mental picture we mostly like to draw is based primarily on a combination of manmade Greek mythology, the works of an Italian poet, and a depiction of that work by a later Italian artist.

Am I telling you that Hell doesn't exist? By no means am I saying that. I'm saying that I have serious doubts that the **model** that Dante and Botticelli concocted was right. What we can know biblically as truth is that after death the righteous dead go to be with God in Heaven. We also know that the wicked dead go somewhere else and it is very unpleasant to say the least. We know that at a later time there will be a great judgment in which all who have ever lived... including the righteous and the unrighteous... will stand before Yeshua, and be held accountable for their lives (our lives), and be judged. One judgment to everlasting joy, the other to terrible torment. There will be no middle ground nor a waiting room. There will be fire and/or destruction involved for the wicked; whether this essentially ends their torment as their souls are finally fully destroyed, or they go on existing in some painful state, into infinity, is not at all clear to me. But I do know that it is something no sane person would want.

Much of God's Word (including Christ's statements) lets us know that we definitely don't want to land on the wrong side of judgment. The thing is, there's one and only one way to land on the right side... the safe and secure side... of a judgment that can not be avoided: that way is to sincerely trust in the God of Israel and His Son, the Messiah, Yeshua of Nazareth. This will **not** be a no-fault verdict rendered by Christ. There will be no *nolo contendere* accepted. There will be no various levels of judgment with a menu of subsequent punishments. There will not be a journey that once we die we must take to prove ourselves, or divest ourselves of our un-repentant sins, so that eventually we have a chance to reach Heaven. Our death is the moment our eternal fates are sealed. Our journey is instantaneous. There are no do-overs after we die. But knowing that some of you who are listening or watching haven't yet made up your minds about devoting your lives to the Lord Yeshua, I say this to you: realize that if you don't choose, God will choose for you and what I've described will happen to you. It doesn't have to be that way no matter what bad and wrong things you may have done in your lives. Jesus died on the cross to save you from that fate, if you will accept that great gift of freedom. Your sins of the past... and your present... can be forgiven.

Let's move on and read the final section of Matthew chapter 23.

RE-READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 23:34 - end

There is a notable change beginning at verse 34. We begin to enter the realm of prophecy and this will expand as we move to chapter 24. Yeshua's words will

attest to and give some information about the End Times. The reality is that the stage of Christ's ministry that was all about teaching and miracle healings is nearly closed. So it is His death, resurrection and the aftermath that will dominate what comes next, but not before He explains about things of the future that are certain to come. Things that His disciples didn't always understand were actually distant as opposed to imminent.

Verse 34 says that Jesus will personally be the one to send prophets, wise-men, and scribes from here on. The thought of exactly what they're to do is not completed thus I think it must have been somewhat self-evident. Very likely this is not meant to speak of 3 separate and commonly identifiable groups as much as it is to say that every kind of messenger specially sent by God (in this case, God's Son) is included even if they might not have any of those specific job titles. They represent what God has always done in the history of Israel, and in the past all too often these messengers were met with hostility and even death. Yeshua is saying that history will repeat even though the Pharisees just finished claiming in verse 30 that despite their ancestors murdering some of God's Prophets, they themselves would never have done so (as the religious leadership) if they had been present. Yeshua is rebutting that false sentiment.

Rather, says Christ, these religious leaders are going to do exactly what their fathers did. They're going to kill some who God sends, others they will flog (beat up) in their Synagogues, and still others they will run out of town and doggedly follow them trying to ruin their witness whenever they may go. This group of people that Yeshua will send are intended as righteous replacements for the corrupt men that stand before Him; men that are leading the Jewish people away from God's truth, from their only means of redemption, and potentially towards eternal separation from Him.

Some commentators focus on the words "**your** Synagogues" as meaning Jewish Synagogues versus gentile Churches. Others say "your Synagogues" means the non-believing Jewish Synagogues versus the believing ones. I think that Jesus is generalizing and not talking in precise particulars. These Pharisees are representative of the leadership of the Synagogue system. So in that sense, all Synagogues (at least the ones in the Holy Land, or maybe just in Judea) are **their** Synagogues. It is a statement making them responsible and accountable for what happens in all Synagogues in general.

Verse 35 is a bit of a challenge in a couple of areas. Yeshua says that these

Pharisees are responsible for all the blood shed on earth, even that of Abel and of a fellow named Zechariah son of Barachiah. I think that the word "earth" probably ought to be "land". The Hebrew word **eretz** means land or earth. While that word isn't used here because we're reading English that was translated from Greek and not Hebrew, even so Yeshua was thinking in Hebrew or Aramaic terms and Jewish thought: not Greek. Making the Pharisees responsible for deaths in pagan gentile nations on the entire planet doesn't fit. Rather this must be talking about all the unjustifiable deaths in the Holy Land (**eretz Israel**). But why are they even responsible for that?

Even more, how can the Pharisees be held divinely responsible for anyone's death that took place thousands of years earlier: as with the death of Abel at the hand of Adam's son Cain? Or closer to home, why are they held responsible for the death of Zechariah, something that took place at the Temple? The first order of business is to identify this particular Zechariah. Very probably, whomever it was, was from the distant past in the same way Abel was in the distant past. 2Chronicles chapter 24 speaks about Zechariah son of Jehoiada who was killed in the Temple area. In times closer to Christ's day Josephus mentions a Zechariah son of Barach that was killed in the Temple. But there's no record of Zechariah son of Barachiah that has ever been found. I won't speculate. Whoever it was Jesus knew of, no doubt so did those He was talking to.

Another issue is that Jesus was talking to Pharisees, so they would have had nothing to do with the Temple, and had no authority there at all. Pharisees were, compared to the Levite Priests, laymen. So what they had to do with a killing near the Temple altar is a head scratcher. Therefore Christ likely is talking in some symbolic sense. God holds a person accountable for their own sins and not the sins of others. So I think the answer to this puzzle might be in what Yeshua said just a few verses earlier. I'm going to quote from the NAB not because the CJB is wrong, but because I think the NAB more clearly says in a dynamic way Christ's intent.

^{NAB} **Matthew 23:32** *now fill up what your ancestors measured out!*

What did the ancestors of these religious leaders measure out? Their wrath. They measured out their wrath upon the innocent. And this group standing before Yeshua is going to fill that cup of wrath of their ancestors to overflowing as they will in time viciously go after those who follow Jesus as Messiah. Just as a note: Paul was a hired hunter for the Jewish religious establishment that, about 30

years after Christ, was sent to Damascus (among other places) to seek out and arrest all the followers of Yeshua that he could find. The persecution by the Jewish religious establishment was so dangerous that Jesus's brother, James, who led the Believers in Jerusalem, had to hold their meetings in an underground grotto on the Hill of Zion (that today is the Greek section of Jerusalem) and that grotto has been found.

So, here is what I believe to be the answer as to why Yeshua says that these Pharisees will bear the guilt for deaths that happened long before their time. It has to do with a core principle of the Torah that is measure-for-measure. Lex Talionis. Proportional justice with proportional punishment. These Pharisee leaders are shortly going to have their hostility towards Yeshua grow so hot... their hatred going well beyond any doctrinal differences... that they are going not only to help, but to insist, that the Romans crucify Yeshua. Therefore the measure of judgment due to these Pharisees puts the murder of Jesus upon their heads. And the murder of Jesus is so atonement can be made even for the countless murderers over the hundreds of years that not only have to do with the Hebrews of the Holy Land (the murder of Zechariah for instance), but it is extended to all humans that have ever inhabited the planet, anywhere (Abel was the given example). I can think of no greater measure of God's wrath due to anyone except for that. Therefore as it stands in the context of the times of Yeshua, it is the religious leaders of the Hebrews... throughout the ages... that are the catalyst for God to do the things He is doing and going to do with Israel... it has little to nothing to do with what pagan gentiles do. The pagans behave pagan-ly because they're pagans. But God's people know better. They have the Torah; they have God's Word. Above all, their religious leaders ought to know better and thus will be held as most accountable.

In verse 36 Yeshua seems to say that God's wrath will not only fall on these Jewish religious leaders, but also on all the Jews of this generation. Is Yeshua making all Jews responsible? Or is He saying all Jews of Yeshua's own generation (meaning currently living Jews) will suffer the collateral damage? I think it's the latter. This generation has seen or heard of Yeshua's miracles and His wisdom. They have heard John the Baptist make proclamations about who Jesus is and about the Holy Spirit descending upon Yeshua. They will soon see mind boggling things as Yeshua goes to the cross, is resurrected, and then appears alive to many. And yet, the vast majority of Jews will refuse to believe. Thus, they are made accountable because of their complicity and their faithlessness to God.

In verse 37 Jesus utters some of the most agonizing and heart-rending words we've yet encountered. He says:

^{CJB} Matthew 23:37 *"Yerushalayim! Yerushalayim! You kill the prophets! You stone those who are sent to you! How often I wanted to gather your children, just as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you refused!"*

Here again, we must understand as much of what He doesn't say as what He does. He does not say "Israel, Israel"; so that's not what He's talking about. Jesus is in Jerusalem; hostile territory for Him. Jerusalem is the seat of Jewish religious government, and Jewish religious law. Jerusalem is where the most powerful and the elite among Jews live. Jerusalem (when the Holy Land isn't occupied by a foreign power) is the seat of Israel's national government. But Jerusalem is NOT representative of all the people of Israel anymore than Washington, D.C. is representative of all the people of the USA. What Jerusalem IS representative of is the leadership. So Yeshua is ONLY speaking about Jerusalem and what He holds them accountable for.

He says the leadership is responsible for killing the Prophets (meaning the Old Testament Prophets) and all those that God sent to them with messages of truth and of warning. But what does He mean by "How often I wanted to gather your children"? He is speaking about all the tribes of Israel, especially those we call the 10 Lost Tribes. Jerusalem historically and theologically wasn't only the capital of the Jews; they were and are the capital for the 12 Tribes. It is prophesied by Ezekiel and other Prophets that in the last days God will gather His scattered people, Israel, from the 4 corners of the earth and bring them back to their own land, with Jerusalem as their eternal capital. Even though the fulfillment of that event is happening right now, in our day, for all the world to see, sadly nothing is more prevalent within the historical Church of the past 1800 years than the teaching that God is done with Israel. Folks, Christ was NOT talking about gentiles that He wanted to gather like a hen does her chicks. Israel remains at the center of God's will, at the center of redemption history, and all that will happen until the end of history. Jerusalem's children is talking about all Israel and God's undying love for His people.

Verse 38 seems straightforward enough. Yeshua is speaking about the destruction of the Temple. The Temple is Jerusalem's "house". On the other hand, Ezra and 2 Baruch regularly make no distinction between the city of

Jerusalem and the Temple itself. Once again we can draw on a readily understandable analogy. Neither most Americans nor the world makes any serious distinction between the city of Washington, D.C. versus the White House and Congress that are the buildings and places of government (even though technically we all know the difference). So I suspect that when Yeshua said "your house" He was thinking in the same light as Jerusalem and the Temple sort of being conflated as one thing and being nearly interchangeable terms.

Since the term "house" is technically more representative of the Temple, something we must always take into account in the New Testament is that the Ark of the Covenant with its Mercy Seat, above which God would come down once per year and hover over it in order to allow the High Priest to atone with blood before Him for Israel's sins, the Ark was never present in the Holy of Holies in the entire era of the second Temple. It went missing from the time Babylon conquered Judah and to this day has never been found. To be clear: at the time of Jesus the Ark of the Covenant was not there. And, by the way, this was common knowledge and not some hidden secret of the priests. So this means that since Ezra and Nehemiah had rebuilt the Temple (called the second Temple) the High Priest's annual visit into the Holy Holies was to an empty chamber where he would sprinkle blood onto the floor and not onto the Golden Ark. So had the Temple ceased to be God's House in any meaningful way, long before Yeshua's day? Had it already become little more than a ceremonial monument such that Yeshua could now call it "your house" (referring to the religious leaders of Jerusalem)? My friends, I don't think God lost any sleep worrying about the coming destruction in 70 A.D. of a Temple that had become little more than a den of thieves, run by rich, corrupt aristocrats that didn't even belong to the proper God-ordained line of Aaron in order to be qualified as priests.

This 23rd chapter of Matthew concludes with:

CJB Matthew 23:39 *For I tell you, from now on, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of ADONAI.'*

Yeshua's words are mostly a quote from Psalm 118... part of the Hallel. All the more appropriate because He is in Jerusalem for Passover and the Hallel was chanted during this feast (and all the others as well). Let's read just a few verses around where this statement of Jesus is constructed.

CJB Psalm 118:19-29 ¹⁹ *Open the gates of righteousness for me; I will enter*

them and thank Yah.

²⁰ This is the gate of ADONAI; the righteous can enter it.

²¹ I am thanking you because you answered me; you became my salvation.

²² The very rock that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone!

²³ This has come from ADONAI, and in our eyes it is amazing.

²⁴ This is the day ADONAI has made, a day for us to rejoice and be glad.

²⁵ Please, ADONAI! Save us! Please, ADONAI! Rescue us!

²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of ADONAI. We bless you from the house of ADONAI.

²⁷ ADONAI is God, and he gives us light. Join in the pilgrim festival with branches all the way to the horns of the altar.

²⁸ You are my God, and I thank you. You are my God; I exalt you.

²⁹ Give thanks to ADONAI; for he is good, for his grace continues forever.

Yeshua is placing Himself as the center and focus of this prophetic Psalm, which is about both personal and national salvation. Notice how the Psalm itself speaks of the Pilgrim festival for which Christ is in Jerusalem. It speaks of palm branches laid down, all the way to the horn of the Temple altar, for "He who comes in the name of Adonai". We read in Matthew chapter 21 how Jewish pilgrims carpeted the road with palm branches for Yeshua and His mount to walk upon, in His entry into Jerusalem. But the most important point Christ is making is that He has just laid down the condition for national salvation for Israel. National Israel must acknowledge Him before Israel as a nation and as a people group will be delivered. Still, each individual Israelite can have **personal** salvation in their Messiah Yeshua, just as each individual gentile can.

We'll move to Matthew chapter 24 next time.