

When Jesus Shut Down the Church

Palm Sunday April 5, 2020

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for *He is* good!
For His mercy *endures* forever.

2

Let Israel now say,
“His mercy *endures* forever.”

3

Let the house of Aaron now say,
“His mercy *endures* forever.”

4

Let those who fear the Lord now say,
“His mercy *endures* forever.”

5

I called on the Lord in distress;
The Lord answered me *and set me* in a broad place.

6

The Lord *is* on my side;
I will not fear.
What can man do to me?

7

The Lord is for me among those who help me;
Therefore I shall see *my desire* on those who hate me.

8

It is better to trust in the Lord
Than to put confidence in man.

9

It is better to trust in the Lord
Than to put confidence in princes.

10

All nations surrounded me,
But in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

11

They surrounded me,
Yes, they surrounded me;
But in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

12

They surrounded me like bees;
They were quenched like a fire of thorns;
For in the name of the Lord I will ^[a]destroy them.

13

You pushed me violently, that I might fall,
But the Lord helped me.

14

The Lord *is* my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation.

15

The voice of rejoicing and salvation
Is in the tents of the righteous;
The right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

16

The right hand of the Lord is exalted;
The right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

17

I shall not die, but live,
And declare the works of the Lord.

18

The Lord has chastened^[b] me severely,
But He has not given me over to death.

19

Open to me the gates of righteousness;
I will go through them,
And I will praise the Lord.

20

This is the gate of the Lord,
Through which the righteous shall enter.

21

I will praise You,
For You have answered me,
And have become my salvation.

22

The stone *which* the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.

23

[c]This was the Lord's doing;
It *is* marvelous in our eyes.

24

This *is* the day the Lord has made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it.

25

Save now, I pray, O Lord;
O Lord, I pray, send now prosperity.

26

Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of the Lord!
We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.

27

God *is* the Lord,
And He has given us light;
Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.

28

You *are* my God, and I will praise You;
You are my God, I will exalt You.

29

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for *He is* good!
For His mercy *endures* forever.

Palm Son-day Message:

Twice in Jesus' ministry He shut down church. Once when He began His ministry and second, at the end. On the first occasion He came out of the desert after fasting and praying for 40 days and saw the desecration of His Father's house of prayer and went "table flipping mad." The second was after the Jewish leaders; spiritual and political had rejected Him. He rode into town on the "foal of an ass" and started chasing out the money changers. It makes us wonder what Jesus would say to the current expression of church: lights, cameras, CD/DVD/shirt sales, big names, not to mention coffee sales. Isaiah one gives us the Father's take:

"Quit your worship charades.

I can't stand your trivial religious games:

Monthly conferences, weekly Sabbaths, special meetings—

*meetings, meetings, meetings—I can't stand one more!
Meetings for this, meetings for that. I hate them!
You've worn me out!
I'm sick of your religion, religion, religion,
while you go right on sinning.
When you put on your next prayer-performance,
I'll be looking the other way.”*
Isaiah 1:13-15 The Message

Rabbinic tradition says that Psalm 118 is the Psalm Jesus and the disciples sang in the upper room at the passover seder meal. It begins with Israel's National Anthem. We have popularized it with our saying: “God is good; all the time and all the time, God is good.” When the temple was dedicated, when a war victory was won this was their song. Oh that we had the melody! Ps. 136 has it as a refrain for almost every verse.

The previous Psalm 117, is the shortest chapter of the Bible with two verses and Psalm 119, where every verse has a reference to God's word, is the longest (176 verses!). The very center verse of the Bible is Psalm 118:8 *“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.”*

Today is palm Sunday on the church calendar. The day that Jesus, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” entered Jerusalem through the eastern gate, now closed (Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19:28ff, John 12:12-15). On the other side of the city of Jerusalem the High Priest was bringing in a lamb to be sacrificed for the passover celebration. The people however wanted to see the procession with Lazarus who has been recently raised from the dead and the disciples. What a celebration! They tore down palm fronds, laid down their jackets and “rolled out the red carpet” for their King as they quoted Psalm 118...”Hosanna (save now), Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” It drove the authorities crazy!

After cleansing the temple Jesus would put out a scathing rebuke to the Church leadership recorded in Matthew 23 which ends with a quote from Psalm 118. *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”* Matthew 23:37-39. A week later another crowd, possibly paid to do it, yelled, “Crucify Him!” Forty years later the temple was dismantled by Titus and his Roman hoards. I suspect that when Jerusalem is surrounded by armies again (see Zechariah 14:1-4). The nation will cry out for their Messiah and surprise! Jesus, riding on a white horse with the armies of heaven following will fight for Israel and “all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:26).

Several songs have their origin from this Messianic psalm including the famous, *“This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made, that the Lord has made, we will rejoice, we will rejoice and be glad in it.”* (v. 24).

Jesus quoted Psalm 118:23 to His murderous audience: *Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”* Matthew 21:42 (also in Mark & Luke).

A story is told that when Solomon’s temple was being built a particular stone was quarried off site (for neither hammer or chisel was to be heard there see 1 Kings 6:7) and brought to where the temple was being constructed. Not knowing it was the capstone or keystone the odd shaped stone was rolled down into the Kidron Valley to be swallowed up by weeds. When the final stone was to be laid, they requested it from the quarry only to be told that stone was sent “a long time ago.”

Someone remembered the “stone that the builders rejected” and it was recovered. Jesus is that stone!

This is the year that Israel hopes to offer their first passover lamb *on* the temple mount. I suspect this will infuriate the ten nations bent on Israel’s destruction. Thankfully, the strongest nation in the world just moved their embassy there...

Folks, we could be in a final countdown to the coming of the Lord. However, the Matthew 24:14 task is not complete. We have not reached the finish line so that, “every tribe,...tongue,...nation, and people” can be seated around the throne (Rev. 5:9; 7:9). According to Bible translators 2,163 languages (2019 report) have yet to have a single verse of the Bible translated. Not even John 3:16! The task is not done and the Bride is not yet ready. We are all waiting for the Bridegroom and the Father is waiting on the bride.... Time to rise up Church in unity, maturity & purity (see Ephesians 4).

You may not be able to gather this Palm Sunday but you can lift up the palms of your hands and worship the “Lamb of God who has been found worthy to take the scroll and open the seals thereof.” Heaven is!