

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Lesson 37, Chapter 10 Continued 2

The topic of what Christ signified when He called Himself "the Son of Man" is how we ended our last lesson. In the Torah Class study of the Book of Daniel, lessons 20 and 21, I spent extensive time explaining two important biblical terms: The Son of God and The Son of Man. You can go to those lessons to get a more in depth understanding; but for now just know that despite how it sounds to us, The Son of God is actually about Yeshua's humanity, and The Son of Man points us to His deity. So in the Gospels when we read about Jesus speaking of Himself as the Son of Man, He is saying that He is divine (although clearly nearly no one, including His original 12 Disciples, seemed initially to comprehend His intended meaning).

Without doubt Christ is using the term Son of Man in the sense it was meant in Daniel chapter 7. Let's take a minute to revisit that passage.

CJB Daniel 7:8-14 ⁸ "While I was considering the horns, another horn sprang up among them, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. In this horn were eyes like human eyes and a mouth speaking arrogantly. ⁹ "As I watched, thrones were set in place; and the Ancient One took his seat. His clothing was white as snow, the hair on his head was like pure wool. His throne was fiery flames, with wheels of burning fire. ¹⁰ A stream of fire flowed from his presence; thousands and thousands ministered to him, millions and millions stood before him. Then the court was convened, and the books were opened. ¹¹ "I kept watching. Then, because of the arrogant words which the horn was speaking, I watched as the animal was killed; its body was destroyed; and it was given over to be burned up completely. ¹² As for the other animals, their rulership

was taken away; but their lives were prolonged for a time and a season. ¹³ "I kept watching the night visions, when I saw, coming with the clouds of heaven, someone like a son of man. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ To him was given rulership, glory and a kingdom, so that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him. His rulership is an eternal rulership that will not pass away; and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

Clearly this Son of Man is divine because first, He was invited into Heaven and was led into the very presence of the Ancient One (God). Second, God gave Him a kingdom that would never be destroyed and also gave Him personal rulership over it, accompanied with glory. I've asked myself on many occasions why this connection seems so clear to many of us in modern times, but seemed to fly over the heads of the Jewish people in Christ's day? Why, when Daniel was such a popular book then; and why, when many (or most) Jews felt they were living in the End Times; and why, when other Prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah also spoke about the End Times and the many miraculous things that a divine Messiah would do on earth, were even the Jewish religious authorities oblivious to Yeshua's allusion to the Son of Man and were witness to the growing number of His miracles that they saw with their own eyes?

From a biblical perspective, Isaiah provides the surest answer.

CJB Isaiah 6:5-13 ⁶ One of the s'rafim flew to me with a glowing coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ He touched my mouth with it and said, "Here! This has touched your lips. Your iniquity is gone, your sin is atoned for." ⁸ Then I heard the voice of Adonai saying, "Whom should I send? Who will go for us?" I answered, "I'm here, send me!" ⁹ He said, "Go and tell this people: 'Yes, you hear, but you don't understand. You certainly see, but you don't get the point!' ¹⁰ "Make the heart of this people [sluggish with] fat, stop up their ears, and shut their eyes. Otherwise, seeing with their eyes, and hearing with their ears, then understanding with their hearts, they might repent and be healed!" ¹¹ I asked, "Adonai, how long?" and he answered, "Until cities become uninhabited ruins, houses without human presence, the land utterly wasted; ¹² until ADONAI drives the people far away, and the land is one vast desolation. ¹³ If even a tenth [of the people] remain, it will again be devoured. "But like a pistachio tree or an oak, whose trunk remains alive after its leaves fall off, the holy seed will be its trunk."

The context of this passage has to do with the conquering of Israel by the Assyrians on account of the people of Israel having gone far astray and thus becoming blind and deaf to God's Word, and disregarding His many warnings to them. But it also applied to the circumstances of the exile of Judah that would happen 150 years after that, and even to the eventual dispersing of the Jews late in the 1st century A.D. by the Romans. It also has application to the End Times that is ahead of us. The point is that it is God who stopped up the ears and shut the eyes of the Jewish people such that they couldn't accept what Jesus did and said, and this as a punishment for their unfaithfulness and rebellion.

And even from a less spiritual and more practical matter, Believers today have all manner of resources available to us (along with the benefit of hindsight) to grasp just who this strange Holy Man from Nazareth actually was. We have scores of commentaries written by highly trained Bible scholars. We have libraries open to everyone, usually free of charge. Bibles are in plentiful supply, from very inexpensive to free, and published in dozens of languages. We have the Internet with access to more easily attained information about the Bible and the biblical times than was imaginable even 20 years ago. Not to mention amazing computer based Bible programs that can instantly search the Scriptures for words and phrases, present us with dozens of Bible versions at our fingertips, and have built-in language translators and morphologies. Jews in the 1st century didn't possess any of this. They didn't have Bibles. The wealthy may have possessed one complete book of the Bible but that was as much a luxury item that represented social status, as it was an actual source of study. But in general the common Jewish people only knew what little they learned at their local synagogue, some of which may have had a Torah scroll. As we've already discussed, what they learned was taught through the filter of Tradition. It is no wonder that the Jewish people Yeshua encountered simply could not comprehend what, and who, stood in their midst at this time.

Bottom line: Yeshua was certainly revealing that He was indeed Daniel's mysterious, divine Son of Man because He constantly made that connection. The Jewish people couldn't seem to see it and as I've shown you, a goodly part of the Bible academic world can't either because they too have their ears stopped up and their eyes closed due to their lack of trust.

Let's re-read some more of Matthew chapter 10.

RE-READ MATTHEW CHAPTER 10:24 - end

As with a few verses earlier, some of what is said in verses 24 and 25 is straightforward, and some of it is a bit difficult to untangle. When Yeshua speaks of the 12 Disciples' relationship to Himself, He simply makes an easily understood proverb: a disciple is not above His rabbi, and a slave is not above His Master. His 12 Disciples certainly would not have been surprised with this comment or disagreed in any way. Other New Testament translations say that a disciple is not above his teacher, and the KJV says that a disciple is not about his master. Let's take a quick look at the Greek so that we get a little sharper sense of this proverb.

In the first half of this verse, the word is ***didaskalos***. While the term is generic for teacher, in the New Testament it is invariably used to mean a teacher of the things of God. So for English speakers in the 21st century, the way to understand this is: a disciple is not above the one he follows who teaches God's Word. The second half of verse 24 says that a slave is not greater than his Master. Or as some versions have it, a servant is not above his lord. The word translated as slave or servant is ***doulos*** and it means a purchased slave, or a bond servant, or merely an attendant like a maid. So it speaks of a person, no matter their exact circumstance, that serves someone in authority over them. The Greek word for Master is ***kurios***, and it means the one to whom a person or a thing belongs. It involves a sense of ownership. So for English speakers in the 21st century, we should understand this as meaning that a person who serves is not higher than the one he serves because that person owns him.

In our day and age, the idea of an owned slave immediately conjures up a vision of a shameful time in Western history when people from Africa were captured and sold to people of European descent to be used as slave labor. That is, we cannot help but think of race and bigotry. Yet, that is not what the Bible is talking about here. There is no negative sense to the notion of being a servant or a slave of some kind. Christ speaks of Himself as being a servant (or slave) to His Father in Heaven. Believers are instructed to view ourselves as servants or slaves to Jesus and to His Father. The idea is that we serve one who, from a spiritual standpoint, is master above of us because in a very real sense He owns us. Obviously this is a positive and not a negative, so we need to take what Christ as just said to the 12 in the same light.

Having prefaced what He is about say in verse 25 with the simple proverb of verse 24, He continues with: it is enough that a disciple becomes like his master. Again consulting the Greek there are two terms we need to highlight. First is what

it means to "be like" his master. The word translated to English as "like" or "as" in Greek is **hos**. It does NOT mean to be "the same as". It does NOT mean to "be equal to". It means to be similar; to be of the same kind; or to imitate someone. Thus the 12 Disciples are being told that even though Christ has granted them powers that are similar to what He bears, and they should use those powers in a similar way that He did, they are not He. Yeshua, as their Master, will always be the standard and ideal to strive for, but in the end it is not fully attainable because no mere human will ever be who He uniquely is. Rather, says Christ, it is enough... it is sufficient... that the Disciples bear similar traits that well represents the unmatched traits of their Master. In other words, despite everything I've been telling you and warning you about: "relax"; you don't have to try to be Me.

I can remember my own father telling me, not too long before he passed away, of the day that he learned to relax in the Lord and how much easier life became as a result. My father was a wonderful, Godly man, who took his faith in Christ very seriously. He was always striving to be kind, merciful and forgiving. Yet we can also strive too hard, trying to be too good in our own strength and will, seeking a kind of perfection or righteousness that keeps us full of anxiety and without a feeling of a sustaining inner peace. This is NOT what our Lord Yeshua wants of us. His message to His 12, and to us, is to relax in Him. His yoke is light; it's not an impossible burden to bear. We're not going to be judged harshly because we weren't able to be just like Him in every nuance, action and thought. And yet to relax in Him doesn't give us license to become lazy or disobedient or to take our faith casually, or to quit trying and just eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we may die.

So the final words of verse 25 add a warning. If we're going to strive to imitate our Master (as we should), then we'll be seen by the public as our Master is seen. Thus, says Jesus, if they call the master of the house **Beelzebul**..... let's pause here; what does this mean? Technically **Be'elzebul** is in Hebrew **Ba'alzevul**. Besides **Ba'al** being the name of a false god in the ancient pantheon of gods, little "b" **ba'al** simply means "lord" or "master", without any religious context. Thus **Ba'alzevul** directly translates as "lord (or master) of the house". Thus we literally have Yeshua saying: "if they call the master of house the master of the house". Clearly this makes little sense. Rather it is that in ancient Jewish culture the term "lord of the house", **Ba'alzevul**, came to be a name or title for Satan. So, the best way to understand the meaning is: if they call the master of the house Satan, then they will also identify the members of

Satan's household with him. And indeed, already back in chapter 9 verse 34 we read concerning Yeshua exorcising demons out of possessed people, that the Pharisees said to the impressed onlookers that only Satan can expel Satan's demons. Thus more than implying that Yeshua's power and authority came from Satan (**Beelzebul**) and not from God. So says Christ, when the 12 Disciples, now armed with the abilities to do many of the same things that their Master did, actually goes out and does them and pronounces the Good News, some will accuse them of having their power come from Satan.

I want to expand on this. It is regularly taught by Bible commentators that **Beelzebul** means "lord of the flies". In fact, within modern Christianity, this is perhaps the most common teaching on this passage. This interpretation didn't occur until the earlier part of the 19th century and was the result of a book written by a Frenchman. Jacques Albin Simon Collin de Plancy was an occultist who was fascinated with demons and wrote a book that caught the imagination of the European Christian community; it was called Dictionnaire Infernal (that is, The Infernal Dictionary). In it he essentially charted out an entire realm of the demon world complete with an elaborate system that operated on a hierarchy of many levels. Some 40 years after he first published his work, it was re-published with lots of illustrations in it, and some of the illustrations depicted Satan and his demons as having the ability to fly. As a result of this, Satan and his demons became known as "fliers", which a few years later was slightly shortened to "flies". It was not meant in the sense of pesky and dirty houseflies but rather merely in the sense of beings that can fly. But, as it often happens, as we get into the 20th century the term flies indeed was assumed to mean houseflies and so there you have it: Beelzebub has transformed to mean Lord of the Flies. Now this meaning has been incorporated into the Western Bible, and the average Christian is none the wiser.

I tell you this short anecdote not only to help you understand the actual meaning of verse 25, but also to demonstrate how over the centuries that occultism and paganism have crept into Christianity with few people recognizing it, but rather assuming because a Theologian or a Pastor speaks it, it must be correct. But now apply this same principle to the Jews of the 1st century. They too looked to their "theologians" and "pastors"..... the priests and the scribes..... for understanding. But paganism and the occult had also gradually crept into the Hebrew faith with few having any clue about it. At times we read of a frustrated Jesus just for this reason. Rather than being able to put up a banner and say: "Your wait is over! Your Messiah is here and it is I", He had to confront the

Traditions that had been taught, and to dispute with those who taught them, and to re-teach the old and timeless truth of the Torah and the Prophets before the meaning of His advent could be properly understood. Let those with ears, hear.

In verse 26, now that Jesus has shaken-up His disciples with some words of warning, He offers encouragement that the 12 need not be in fear of their critics and persecutors. Why? Because as He goes on to say that what is covered will be uncovered, and that what is secret will be revealed. Nothing and no one can stop the message from being understood and spreading. The subject matter of their evangelizing (to this point, it is announcing the Good News that the Kingdom of Heaven has arrived on earth) will go out and many will be enlightened and benefit from it, despite the Disciples' worry that they may be failing. In the ***P'shat*** sense, this says that indeed many of the Jewish people will open their minds and believe the Disciples that the Kingdom of Heaven has arrived. In the ***Remez*** sense what the Disciples will be doing are but the first baby steps into a centuries long undertaking. Yeshua is speaking of the many mysteries of the Redemption process that are only beginning to open up for people to grasp, in the same way that a flower almost imperceptibly begins to slowly open its petals to finally reveal the beautiful and wondrous pistil in its center, whereby reproduction can occur.

An important point here is that the Disciples are not to judge with their eyes if they are succeeding or not. They are not to have an expectation of instant success. Their job is not to convert people; it is only to speak the truth. And to speak that truth according to their current understanding, and not what will be eventually revealed in the future. Thus when Christ says that what is said in the dark needs to be spoken in the light; and what is whispered is to be openly spoken on the housetops, this does not mean that darkness or whispering in the way He is using it is in any way negative or wicked. We are meant to picture Christ and His eager Disciples sitting together in the evening, around a camp fire, His Disciples listening and absorbing as their Master teaches them. I imagine it was like trying to drink from a fire hose. Whispering merely means that what He is teaching them has been done in private, and so far it has only been for them. But now that they have learned and are prepared, they are to take it out publicly and disperse it to all the Jewish people. This is the ***P'shat*** sense of it. The ***Remez*** sense is that this applies to all would-be disciples of Christ. Thus the ***P'shat*** applies to before Yeshua's resurrection (when the message was explicitly only for Israel), but the ***Remez*** applies to after the resurrection (when the message would now also be sent out to the entire gentile world as well).

Verse 28 is familiar to nearly all Believers. Do not fear is the message. Specifically it is broaching the subject of death, and that it should not be feared. The first thing to notice is how Yeshua speaks of the body and soul as separate entities. So the death of the body does not also mean the death of the soul. Before we discuss body and soul, let's again talk about fear because due to the Covid-19 pandemic we are enduring, fear is running rampant, including among Christians.

The English term "fear" is expressed by a number of Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible. They all have slightly different meanings; sometimes the difference between them is hard to separate. Another thing to understand is that when translating from the original language to English we must be careful not to misunderstand because the same word can invoke different images, and indicate different things, in different eras. I'll give you a prime example. In Medieval times and earlier, the terms love and hate were often used on a political level. To love your king meant to be loyal to him; to hate your king meant to be disloyal. The term fear was also used politically. To fear your king is the same as it means to fear your God; it first and foremost pointed towards absolute loyalty. To this meaning is usually added a sense of reverence, respect and an acknowledgement that this person has true and legitimate power over you. Thus to fear and to be afraid were, in bygone times, quite different situations. To fear your king, then, is not the same as being afraid of your king. To be afraid of your king (or of God) means to be in dread of him.

So with that said, what does it mean in verse 28 to not fear someone who can kill your body, but do fear someone who can kill both your body and your soul? The Greek word used in this case is **phobeo**. It is where we get the English term "phobia". If we have a phobia of spiders, we certainly don't have loyalty, respect or reverence for them; rather we are in dread of them. Thus depending on your Bible translation, you might find the word "afraid" instead of "fear", and I think "afraid" better captures the sense of it. Or, to use the direct connection between the Greek **phobeo** and the English phobia, "Do not have a phobia for those who can kill your body, but do have a phobia for those who can kill your body and your soul". Don't be in dread of those who can kill your body, but do be in dread of those who can kill your body and soul. There is no way that we can not notice an element of possible martyrdom in Christ's words.

To the Disciples Yeshua is saying that they shouldn't worry about being killed for their faith. It can happen; but if you wander around constantly afraid and in dread

you certainly can't do your job properly. I remember in a very moving and hard hitting TV series call Band of Brothers about WWII, there were a number of interviews with survivors of a particular Army unit from the 101st Airborne. One man spoke about being scared. He said that everyone was scared all the time; but that some people handled it better. That if one was too afraid, they couldn't function as soldiers must. And that he was one that could handle the fear. This man was well aware he could die; he saw death all around him and of course hoped it wouldn't happen to him. Yet, he wasn't in dread of it each day he awoke. He didn't have a phobia about it, so he could function, not fall to pieces or shrink from the battlefield, and do his dangerous job. I think this is a fairly good analogy of what Jesus is saying to the 12, and to all of us.

As Believers who are saved, Yeshua advises us that we no longer have to fear death because the essence of who we are lives on in a very real way in our soul. We don't have to live in dread; of a murderer, of a car accident or a plane crash..... or of a pandemic virus. A virus such as the one that has enveloped our globe is serious and indeed can, under the right circumstances, kill our body. But never can it kill our soul. So as Believers we don't have to be germophobic (or today, virophobic). Death comes to us all at some point; and there is no reason to dread it even though none of us look forward to it.

So what should we have a phobia about? It should be about our soul being destroyed, says Christ. Or, as it is put in this verse, the same one who can kill the body also has the power to kill the soul. There is only one being that can kill the soul: God. So while we should never have a phobia about bodily death, we should definitely have a phobia about soul death, accompanied with a fear (a reverence, respect, and loyalty) of the only One who can kill both: God.

The final words of this verse speak of the body and soul being destroyed in Gehenna. Gehenna translates the Hebrew **Gei-Hinnom**. **Gei-Hinnom** is the Valley of Hinnom that runs through Jerusalem. That valley was used as the municipal dump site. Every imaginable kind of refuse was thrown into it. It would have filled up pretty quickly except that they kept a fire burning in the trash to reduce it to ashes. Since animal carcasses, even body parts, were thrown in there (and at times entire corpses were as well) one can only imagine the never ending stench. To reduce the foul odors sulfur was also thrown in. Thus, there was no more shameful, horrible thing that a Jewish person could imagine than having one's own dead body throw into that garbage dump and burnt up along with every foul thing. Such a thing could only be viewed as a punishment of the

worst order. Thus Gei-Hinnom was thought of by the Jews in the same way Christians think of Hell.

What we see here in Matthew 10 is actually a glimpse into one stream of Jewish theology about death at the time (there were others). While there was no clear map about what happened to a soul after death, clearly there was the thought that the soul did live on outside of the deceased body. And yet the soul could be destroyed. There were those Jews who equated the horrors of **Gei-Hinnom** with what happens to departed souls after the general resurrection and the End of Days when God judges them. The unrighteous would be thrown into **Gei-Hinnom**. The theology of the Bosom of Abraham was also in play at this time, and it was believed to be a chamber under the earth where the souls of the righteous dead reside (people who lived before Christ went to the Cross, but were imputed with righteousness according to their trust in God)..... at least some of the righteous dead... and I am certain that this is where Paul thought that Christ descended after His resurrection. Listen first to Ephesians where Paul talks about this event. .

CJB Ephesians 4:4-10 ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as when you were called you were called to one hope.* ⁵ *And there is one Lord, one trust, one immersion,* ⁶ *and one God, the Father of all, who rules over all, works through all and is in all.* ⁷ *Each one of us, however, has been given grace to be measured by the Messiah's bounty.* ⁸ *This is why it says, "After he went up into the heights, he led captivity captive and he gave gifts to mankind."* ⁹ *Now this phrase, "he went up," what can it mean if not that he first went down into the lower parts, that is, the earth?* ¹⁰ *The one who went down is himself the one who also went up, far above all of heaven, in order to fill all things.*

So is this a brand new thought by Paul? No. As he says in verse 8, "This is why it says..." So some writing he knows about says something he is about to quote. That "something" comes from Psalm 68.

CJB Psalm 68:18-20 ¹⁸ *God's chariots are myriads, repeated thousands; Adonai is among them as in Sinai, in holiness.* ¹⁹ *After you went up into the heights, you led captivity captive, you took gifts among mankind, yes, even among the rebels, so that Yah, God, might live there.* ²⁰ *Blessed be Adonai! Every day he bears our burden, does God, our salvation. (Selah)*

There are other mentions in this Psalm about saving and salvation, so it is little wonder that Paul saw in Psalm 68 a prophecy about Messiah. And Paul, making midrash on Psalm 68, says that since this messianic Psalm says "he went up", then logically he (Yeshua) first must have gone down. And if he went down, where did he go and why? He went down into the earth, and he made captivity captive. This strange phrase operates, I think, like a double negative. That is, if a word is a negative and then you make a negative about the negative, it becomes a positive. If I say, "don't not shut the door", the two negatives "don't" and "not" work together to cancel each other out and make the statement positive. In my example, then, "don't not shut the door" effectively means "shut the door". So to make captivity captive (two things we can take negatively) can only mean to cancel captivity. It's like taking the Jailer of the captives and throwing him in prison (making him captive) so that all the prisoners can go free and there's no one left to keep others captive any more. So in the case of Jesus descending into the earth post-resurrection, Paul thinks He ended the captivity..... of whom? Certainly not of the demons. So it had to be of the dead. But what dead? All dead? No. Only of the righteous dead of Abraham's Bosom that harbored only Israelites. Those who resided there could be released from their captivity (that was used to shut them up in spiritual safety for a time) and now they could go on to Heaven due to Christ's atoning death. At that moment Abraham's Bosom was emptied out and it will remain empty forever because Yeshua's death and resurrection made captive waiting pointless. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord".

OK. So now Yeshua has offered a few different forms of encouragement to the Disciples who have been told unequivocally that their mission will be fraught with dangers, opposition, and possible death. Verses 29 through 31 offer another encouragement of a different kind. Along the same lines of "yes, you might get killed but don't worry because your soul will live on", now we get something from Yeshua that more or less says, "don't worry because God is watching and nothing happens that is not in His will". This is a reminder more than it is some new revelation as this pretty well expresses an existing doctrine of the Jews. Whatever happens **MUST** be in God's will or He actually isn't in control no matter how much we want to convince ourselves otherwise.

To demonstrate just how important these 12 are to God, Jesus draws an analogy. He says that as inexpensive as sparrows are to purchase, and as many millions or billions of them there are, not one sparrow dies (falls to the ground) without God the Father allowing it. Most modern Believers don't realize that the

poor people among Israel regularly ate sparrows as food because they were so plentiful and easy to catch, and therefore cheap to buy. Sparrows were perfectly kosher. And the pricing structure to buy sparrows at market to use for food was, according to Matthew, 2 sparrows for an assarion. An assarion was a Roman coin that was worth about 1/16th of a denarius (one denarius was the standard pay for a day laborer). Luke gives a different value: 5 sparrows for 2 assarions..... slightly cheaper. Nonetheless, by any standard sparrows were plentiful, carried a low value, and so the poorest of Jews could afford them for meat. But as low in value as they are from the human perspective, every single sparrow matters to the Father.

In contrast with sparrows, God keeps humans under even closer observation and care. Verse 30 says that not only does God know each and every human, He counts and knows the exact number of hairs on each human's head. Most commentators think, as I do, that this is a Jewish expression or a kind of proverb. It probably falls along the lines of counting the stars in the sky or the grains of sand on the sea shore. It is not meant that God, or perhaps some of His angelic servants, run around endlessly counting human hairs. Rather it is figurative of just how closely God keeps watch over His human creatures, and how He knows each of us so perfectly well and knows our circumstances in such detail. I have a mental picture of a mother regularly taking her child over to a doorway and marking his/her height because she delights in every detail of her child growing and thriving.

The logical conclusion to this? Don't be in fear because if God cares for sparrows so much, imagine how much He cares for you! Your value to God is off the charts compared to what it is for a sparrow, each of which matters to Him. Once again the Greek word Matthew chooses for "fear" is **phobeo**; a dread. So, don't be phobic over the many bad things that could happen to you, but equally likely won't happen. And yet, just under the surface is the meaning that perhaps the Disciples don't know what might happen to them, or why something bad does happen, but rest assured the Holy One who cares even for the tiniest birds places immense value on every human life. A scary or tragic or unjust event is not the signal that God has lost interest in you. It is only that as human beings, our minds cannot possibly fathom God's plans and ways.

Perhaps one of the greatest problems in all of Christianity comes from this common question from Believers and non-Believers alike: why do bad things happen to good people IF there is a God and if He loves us? Invariably a Pastor

or a Rabbi tries to help make a victim or a victim's friends and relatives make sense of it in order to comfort them. I'd like to tackle this question very briefly but will likely cause some unintended offense to someone hearing this who has suffered greatly. My apologies upfront. To the non-Believer this question is meant to challenge God's very existence. But for the Believer the very thought, let alone asking out loud, of questioning God about why He allows what He allows, is an indication of our obvious disagreement with it. This attitude can only come from a personal lack of faith and trust in God. One doesn't have to live very long to learn that not only do bad things happen to good people, but also good things happen to bad people, which can be equally disconcerting. In the Targum of Job, we read: ***"You cannot understand the things with which you have grown up; so how can your mind comprehend the way of the Most High?"***

The problem of evil (something Christ was dealing with as He talked with His Disciples) was something the ancients of most cultures and religions faced. Of course, the first thing one had to do was to define what was evil, but also to define what a good person amounted to. Biblically, a good person is one thing only: a righteous God worshipper. The thing that followers of Yeshua must always keep in mind is that while the here and now matters greatly in our lives and to God, Our Savior makes it clear that it is the eternal future that matters even above it. His statement in Chapter 10 about fearing not him who can kill only our body but rather he who can kill body AND soul makes this point.

Despite all appearances, no matter what the circumstance or outcome, as worshippers of the God of Israel we must live our lives resolved that 1) every human life matters to Him, and 2) everything that happens, good or bad, does not escape His gaze nor is it outside of His will. We must finally learn to be as Job and to stop fretting and questioning and doubting; we must admit to ourselves that no amount of education, and no amount of religious degrees, and no amount of our goodness, or earthly wisdom or public adulation will ever give us the ability as mere humans to fathom the depths of God. We must have faith; which means to observe, trust, and demand no satisfying explanation that meets with our preconceived perceptions.

We'll continue in Matthew 10 next time.