

Holiness of God Will Be Seen When Israel Returns to the Land

I have always been moved emotionally by the first verse in many call the Lord's Prayer. Here are the first two lines of the prayer Jesus gave to us.

Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Matthew 6:9 (NASB)

First, Jesus tells us to pray to the Father. When Jesus said that, He made a very humble statement. He directed us to pray to the Father and not to Himself.

In the second line, Jesus tells us to pray, "Hallowed be Your name." The Greek word for "hallowed" is *hagizo*, which means to make holy. This is we are to make God holy. But how do we make God holy? We find the answer in different passages in Scripture, but Numbers 20 is my favorite example. It is also a very clear example.

Numbers 20 tells us that during Israel's wanderings, they stopped in the wilderness of Zin, where a sad event happened. We are told the nation of Israel complained that they did not have any food or water. So Moses and Aaron visited God. God told Moses to

speaking to a rock and water would flow out of the rock. But

instead, Moses struck the rock with his staff. The water flowed and everything looked wonderful. The people had water to drink. Moses looked like a great leader and God's man. They needed water and Moses hit that rock and provided the water.

But Numbers 20:12-13 records some bad news.

But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." Those were the waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel contended with the LORD, and He proved Himself holy among them. Numbers 20:12-13 (NASB)

God told Moses and Aaron that they could not enter the promised land. Why? We are told that Moses did not treat God as holy. He did not make God holy. That is, Moses reflected badly upon God's character to the people and to the angels in heaven.

The angels in heaven knew Moses had been told to speak to the rock but instead he hit the rock just as he had been asked to do on a previous occasion.

We must not miss verse 13 which says that God "proved Himself holy among" the

people. That is when the people complained because they had



a need, God helped them. God showed Himself to be holy. He cared for them. That means this passage reveals how our behavior reflects upon God. Since we are His followers, our behavior reflects upon Him. We hear people say that a particular person claims to be a Christian but notice how the person behaves. The message is that we hallow God's name, or we make God appear holy by our behavior. Righteous behavior makes God look holy to the world and to the invisible world.

Also, Matthew 5:16 tells us that our behavior brings God glory. Again, it is our behavior. It says,

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:16 (NASB)

INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 28:20-26. This is an important concept for us to remember as we study Ezekiel 28:20-26. We are going to discover how God makes Himself look holy in a different situation. We already know that His behavior and our behavior make Him look holy. In this study, we are going to discover what actions He took that made Him look holy.

Before we read our first verse, I want to quickly summarize our recent studies. We are currently in a series of prophecies about seven nations. The first prophecy was about four nations in Ezekiel 25. God announced that the four nations would be destroyed because three were antisemitic and one was anti-Judaism. In Ezekiel 26, 27, and 28, God prophesied that Tyre would be destroyed because it was antisemitic also! That was nation number five. Each nation was rejoicing that Israel was being destroyed. Our study today is from Ezekiel 28:20-26. The first part of the study is another prophecy. It is about a sixth nation called Sidon.

PROPHECY AGAINST SIDON. Verses 20-22 start the prophecy about Sidon.

*And the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Son of man, set your face toward Sidon, prophesy against her and say, "Thus says the Lord GOD,
"Behold, I am against you, O Sidon,
And I will be glorified in your midst.*

*Then they will know that I am the LORD when I execute judgments in her,
And I will manifest My holiness in her."'"*
Ezekiel 28:20-22 (NASB)

The prophecy begins in verse 22 with, "and say, "Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against you, Sidon." It is always bad news when God is against you, or when God is punishing you. I wonder if Sidon knew about the prophecy?

In verse 22 of the prophecy, Yahweh gives us three goals or purposes for the destruction of Sidon. In verse 23, Yahweh will explain the punishment that He will inflict upon them and repeats one of the purposes for the destruction of Sidon. In verse 24 He will explain Sidon's sin against Israel, which was the reason for their destruction.

Verse 22 give us three reasons for the destruction of Sidon. The first reason that God gives is, "I will be glorified in your midst." That is, Yahweh Himself will glorify Himself by destroying Sidon. The reason Yahweh would be glorified is that when He destroyed them, then they would know that He was the LORD or Yahweh. Their false gods would not be able to protect them.

Apparently, the city of Sidon was started by Sidon, a son of Canaan, who was a son of Ham, Noah's son. (Genesis 10:1, 6, 15, 19). The city was the northern extent of the Canaanite territory. The city of Gaza was the southern extent of the territory. Judges 10:6 reveals that Israel had sinned greatly against Yahweh by worshipping Baal and the Ashtorah, and the gods of Aram, Moab, Ammon, the Philistines, and Sidon. The last part of the verse says that Sidon caused Israel to forsake "the LORD and did not serve Him." So, Yahweh planned to glorify Himself by demonstrating that their false gods were not gods at all. Yahweh said that after Sidon was destroyed, "Then they will know that I am the LORD."

The third purpose for the destruction is, "I will manifest My holiness in her." That is, Yahweh would also prove He is holy by removing sin. This is an important message to us. The message is that the holiness of God demands that He destroy very evil nations. That is our first principle.

Verse 23 now describes the punishment that will fall upon Sidon.

For I will send pestilence to her
And blood to her streets,
And the wounded will fall in her midst
By the sword upon her on every side;
Then they will know that I am the LORD.
Ezekiel 28:23 (NASB)

The destruction will be total. Yahweh planned to use both disease and murder to destroy Sidon. Then they will know that I am the Lord.

Verse 24 ends the prophecy against Sidon. It explains their sin against Israel.

And there will be no more for the house of Israel a prickling brier or a painful thorn from any round about them who scorned them; then they will know that I am the Lord GOD.” Ezekiel 28:24 (NASB)

Sidon was like a prickly plant or a cactus. The Hebrew word for “scorned” is *sut*. It has the basic idea of apostasy or contempt. Judges 10:6 says Sidon had caused Israel to turn away from the Lord.

PROPHECY OF ISRAEL’S RETURN. The next nation that Yahweh will prophesy judgment against will be Egypt. That will be the seventh nation in this series of prophecies in chapters 29 through 32. But in the middle of these prophecies is a wonderful note of encouragement to the nation of Israel and a moment of praise for Yahweh.

Verse 25 of this chapter describes this note of encouragement. Verses 25 say,

Thus says the Lord GOD, “When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and will manifest My holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they will live in their land which I gave to My servant Jacob.” Ezekiel 28:25 (NASB)

Here Yahweh declared that He would do two things. First, Yahweh said He would gather the people of Israel from the places where He had scattered them. It is important for us to notice that Yahweh promised He would gather Israel after

having scattered them.

This warning and promise is repeated in the Old Testament. Because Israel had continually committed a wide range of sins, worshiped other gods, and refused to repent, Yahweh would destroy them - except for a remnant. He used the Assyrian army to punish the northern kingdom of Israel, and the Babylonian army to destroy the southern kingdom of Judah. He scattered them around the Mediterranean Sea and around the world.

This warning was originally given in Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy 4:25-27, we read that Moses warned the nation of Israel that if they worshiped other gods after they entered the promised land, Yahweh would scatter them among other nations. Here is Moses’ message,

When you become the father of children and children’s children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God so as to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD drives you. Deuteronomy 4:25-27 (NASB)

This prophetic warning from Yahweh was given to Israel even though He knew they would eventually abandon Him. Since they had been warned, they were responsible. Yahweh used scattering as an act of judgment.

Then in Deuteronomy 4:29-30, Moses gave Israel some good news.

But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice. Deuteronomy 4:29-30 (NASB)

Yahweh promised that someday they would seek Him. When they did, He implied they would return to the land. Nehemiah

1:8-9 refers to this passage of Scripture. It includes a statement that Moses made that was not recorded in Deuteronomy 4:29-30. Here is Nehemiah 1:9

But if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell. Nehemiah 1:9 (NASB)

It says that Yahweh promised to return Israel to the land if they returned to Him. So, that is the original warning of scattering and the promise of gathering or the return to the land.

The promise to scatter and gather was repeated in Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, and Zechariah. Here are a few examples from Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 9:13-16, Yahweh announced that because of Israel's sins, He would scatter them among the nations. In Jeremiah 18:15-17, Yahweh said that because Israel had "forgotten Me," they would be scattered.

Here is an example from Ezekiel 12:14-16.

I will scatter to every wind all who are around him, his helpers and all his troops; and I will draw out a sword after them. So they will know that I am the LORD when I scatter them among the nations and spread them among the countries. But I will spare a few of them from the sword, the famine and the pestilence that they may tell all their abominations among the nations where they go, and may know that I am the LORD. Ezekiel 12:14-16 (NASB)

So, what have we learned? From Deuteronomy to Ezekiel, Yahweh warned Israel that He would scatter them as an act of judgment. Then it happened in 586 B.C. Ezekiel 24 reveals the Babylonian army burned Jerusalem and the temple, killed two-thirds of the people, and the rest of the people were scattered to other nations.

Then seventy years later, Israel began to return to the land. Daniel 9:1-19 tells us that the prophet Daniel had determined that the Babylonian captivity would last only seventy years. So, he prayed and some Israelites began to return to Jerusalem and Judah in 539 B.C. under the Medo-Persian king Cyrus

(Ezra 1:1).

But we do not want to miss another very important point. It is very clear from a prophecy recorded in Zechariah 10:8-10 that Israel would be scattered again at a later time. Why is this true? First, we must notice that the book of Zechariah was written after the Babylonian captivity had ended. Remember the Babylonian captivity ended in 539 B.C. and Zechariah was written later in 480-470 B.C. So, Zechariah 10:8 and 10 is a prophecy that describes a second scattering and gathering after the Babylonian captivity. So, when was Israel scattered again? The answer is after the Roman army destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. Israel was scattered again and all Israel has not yet been regathered.

It is clear from numerous passages in both the Old and New Testaments that not all of Israel had returned even in the time of Christ (John 7:35; James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1). Even today, all of Israel has not yet returned to the land.

Therefore, when Ezekiel 28:25 said Yahweh would gather Israel after being scattered and then live in the land that He had given to Jacob, we realize that has not yet occurred. In addition, verse 26 adds this,

They will live in it securely; and they will build houses, plant vineyards and live securely when I execute judgments upon all who scorn them round about them. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God." Ezekiel 28:26 (NASB)

Yahweh promised that Israel would live securely and He would punish anyone who scorned Israel, or had contempt for Israel. But that has not yet happened because this prophecy is yet to be fulfilled.

But it will occur in the latter or last days when the Messiah establishes His worldwide kingdom (Genesis 49:1, 8-12; Numbers 24:14-24; Deuteronomy 32:39-43). Jeremiah 23:3-6 says,

"Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing," declares the LORD. Behold, the days are coming," declares the

LORD,

“When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch;

And He will reign as king and act wisely

And do justice and righteousness in the land.

“In His days Judah will be saved,

And Israel will dwell securely;

And this is His name by which He will be called,

“The LORD our righteousness.”

Jeremiah 23:3-6 (NASB)

This means this is a future event, and it will occur during the millennial kingdom where we are told that Messiah will reign, Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. Yahweh will be called our righteousness. That is, His actions reflect on His holiness for Yahweh is a magnificently holy God.

CONCLUSION. Before we close we must notice Yahweh’s statement in verse 25 where He said He would manifest His holiness. He said, “My holiness.” Twice in our study Yahweh announced that He would manifest His holiness. The first time He would manifest His holiness was by destroying Sidon, a wicked and evil nation. The second time Yahweh said He would gather Israel back to the land that He had promised to Jacob. That is, our God reveals His holiness by punishing evil and keeping His promises. This gives us our only principle in this study. Yahweh makes Himself holy by His righteous behavior. We hallow His name by our own godly conduct.