

## Israel and the Name of the Lord – God’s Plan to Vindicate His Reputation

### I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND THE REPUTATION OF GOD

- A. One of the primary concerns of God is for His own reputation amongst the nations. Why? Critical to our growth and maturity is *the knowledge of God*. Knowing Him intimately builds the necessary anchor of truth that knits us to Him in confident trust, which is crucial to our confident access to Him (Eph. 3:12), developed from a deep root system of confidence in love (Eph. 3:16-19). God wants us to draw near to Him to grow in love and fascination for and of His beauty (attributes and character) and His leadership.
- B. At the heart of the theology of Israel is the issue of the *knowledge of God*. When we get the subject of Israel “right” in a way that is aligned with the scriptures, we also align with the God of Israel, His character, His leadership, and ultimately, His Gospel.
- C. What does our theology of Israel say about God? What is at the heart of our own concepts of God, the promises He makes, and how He exercises His plans and purposes? There is a rapidly accelerating, demonic strand of conspiratorial anti-Semitism growing in a very bold and brazen way. It is beginning to cause strife and division within the church and beyond. This is an issue that Paul took very seriously (Rom. 11:25) because so much is at stake for us regarding the subject of Israel and how we understand God Himself.

### II. ISRAEL PROFANED THE LORD’S NAME (EZEK. 36:16-21)

- A. The Prophet Ezekiel proclaimed some of the Lord’s reasons for restoring Israel despite her great sin and rebellion against Him, leading to the fall of Israel at the hands of Babylon (Ezek. 36:16-21). Ezekiel described the challenge that the Babylonian captivity created for the Lord’s name or reputation. Understanding of the Lord’s character and leadership in context to His judgments is a critical issue for the Church. What is the impact of maligning God’s reputation and defaming His name? All of salvation history depends upon God’s people trusting and embracing His leadership.

*<sup>16</sup> Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying: <sup>17</sup> “Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity. <sup>18</sup> Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it. <sup>19</sup> So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. <sup>20</sup> When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when they said of them, ‘These are the people of the Lord, and yet they have gone out of His land.’ <sup>21</sup> But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went.” (Ezek. 36:17-21)*

- 1. Israel **defiled** their land by their sinful ways, especially by murder (blood), immorality, and idolatry. The same sins will resurface in end-time Israel and in the nations.
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***<sup>21</sup>They did not repent of their murders...sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. (Rev. 9:21)***

2. The Lord judged them by scattering them among the nations (Deut. 29:1-30:10).
3. ***“Israel profaned God’s name”***: The fact of Israel requiring to be conquered and exiled due to their sin profaned God’s holy name, as it appeared foreign gods triumphed over the Lord. The very reputation of Yahweh is connected to the people He has covenanted Himself with (*cf.* Rom. 2:24). The actions of Israel demanded justice and judgement; however, the wrath and judgments of God are often, if not always, misunderstood and maligned by wicked men.
  - a. Hating the doctrine of judgment and wrath results in the false notion that good men conflict with an “angry unreasonable God” rather than concluding that evil men are in trouble (debt) with a *good, righteous, and just God*.
4. ***“They” said of Israel***: The Gentiles asked why God’s people were driven out of His land. Israel was disciplined by God when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and took the people captive.
  - a. This brought reproach to God’s name because it appeared that He had not been willing or able to protect Israel or fulfill His promises to them (36:19-20).
  - b. The nations drew false conclusions about the Lord after witnessing what Babylon did to Israel. That is, Israel’s exile from the land made a mockery of God’s reputation.
5. ***“I had concern for My holy name”***: The Lord’s zeal for His name is an important part of His motivation for restoring Israel to the land.
  - a. Regarding Israel’s future exaltation, calling, and destiny, it is essential for God’s people to be rooted in gratitude with humility. The Lord is establishing a “salvation storyline” for His family that is rooted in extravagant, undeserved love and mercy that produces tenderness and lowliness of heart.
  - b. Israel’s safety and national well-being in the age to come is connected to taking responsibility for their national sin (that was committed in this age). Israel must not continue to rationalize or blame-shift their sin (with a defensive and stubborn heart), but rather must respond with gratitude and humility.
  - c. Yahweh – the God of Israel – understands the “stakes” of His name remaining holy (“hallowed be Your name”), precious, and cherished in the hearts of His people. The Father works to set things right with Israel so that who He is as a Father can be rightly understood and worshipped, which sets the course of our lives and families in a powerful way. God’s concern for His name in this passage is rooted in His concern for the spiritual vitality and life of His people as well as the future of all peoples, nations, and tribes across the earth. All must view God rightly, which is the only way we experience unity, profound joy, and complete peace (*shalom*) together.

- d. God wants voluntary love from His people, so He will not force any person or nation to love Him. He is creating the optimum environment for multitudes to choose love by the way He has directed history over 6,000 years. The result will be God's glory (love, gratitude, humility) filling the earth.

### III. THE LORD WILL VINDICATE HIS NAME BY TRANSFORMING ISRAEL (EZEK. 36:22-36)

- A. The Lord will vindicate His name and reputation in the sight of the nations (36:22-23).

<sup>22</sup> ***“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. <sup>23</sup> And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.” (Ezek. 36:22-23)***

1. ***Not for your sake:*** The Lord is not going to restore Israel for the sake of national honor among the nations that they deserve because of their special dedication or abilities. The Lord wanted to establish clearly that Israel had no claim to receiving honor from God.
2. ***Profaned God’s name:*** They profaned God’s name, or His reputation and character, amongst the nations.
3. ***Sanctify My name:*** He will sanctify His name by openly revealing *what He is like* and not allowing Israel or the Church to continue to defame it (as they have done through history). He will display His love, power, and wisdom in the way that He establishes Israel in the land in great blessing and world leadership and yet in a relationship of obedient love to Him.
4. The Lord will sanctify His name before Israel and all the nations by causing them to see what He does when He judges the Antichrist’s empire (Ezek. 38:16-17; 39:7, 21-22).

***4“You [the Antichrist] shall fall upon the mountains of Israel...<sup>7</sup>The nations shall know that I am the LORD...<sup>21</sup>I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed...<sup>22</sup>Israel shall know I am the LORD...” (Ezek. 39:4-22)***

- B. Israel’s national salvation and supernatural transformation (36:25-32): This passage points out that Israel will begin to regather to the land in unbelief—notice the word “then” in 36:25.

<sup>24</sup> ***“For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup> I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. <sup>28</sup> Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. <sup>29</sup> I will deliver you from all your uncleanness. I***

**will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. <sup>30</sup> And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. <sup>31</sup> Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations.” (Ezek. 36:24-31)**

1. The Lord will give Israel a **new heart** that is inspired, instructed, and energized by the indwelling Spirit. The *heart of stone* speaks of rebellious heart that is unmoved by God. A *heart of flesh* speaks of a soft heart that is sensitive, tender, and easily moved by the Spirit.
  2. Israel will **remember** their evil ways in a way that produces gratitude.
- C. The Lord’s gracious restoration of Israel will reveal the truth about God to the nation (36:33-36).

**33 ‘Thus says the Lord God: “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt. 34 The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. 35 So they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.’ 36 Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the Lord, have spoken it, and I will do it.” (Ezek. 36:33-36)**

1. **The nations which are left** is speaking of the time in the age to come in which all nations shall know that the Lord rebuilt the nation of Israel.
  2. God’s name and reputation being sanctified includes the Lord cleansing Israel from sin, empowering her by the Spirit, rebuilding the nation, replanting the agriculture, and more.
- D. The Lord desires partnership with Israel. He answers their prayers to increase their population (36:37-38). Rain on Israel in the age to come will also come in response to prayer.

**<sup>37</sup> ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them: I will increase their men like a flock. <sup>38</sup> Like a flock offered as holy sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they shall know that I am the Lord.” (Ezek. 36:37-38)**

**<sup>1</sup> Ask the Lord for rain in the time of the latter rain. The Lord will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone. (Zech. 10:1)**

**Verses referencing God's concern for His Name and Reputation:**

**Exodus 39:7**

So I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not *let them* profane My holy name anymore. Then the nations shall know that *I am* the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

**Deuteronomy 5:11**

'You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

**Joshua 7:9**

For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will You do for Your great name?"

**Jeremiah 14:7**

Though our iniquities testify against us,  
act, O LORD, *for your name's sake*;  
for our backslidings are many;  
we have sinned against you.

**Jeremiah 14:21**

Do not spurn us, *for your name's sake*;  
do not dishonor your glorious throne;  
remember and do not break your covenant with us.

**Daniel 9:19**

O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive.  
O Lord, pay attention and act.  
Delay not, *for your own sake*, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.

**1 Samuel 12:22**

For the LORD will not forsake his people, *for his great name's sake*, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself.

**Psalms 23:3**

He restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness<sup>1</sup>  
*for his name's sake*.

**Psalms 25:11**

*For your name's sake*, O LORD,  
pardon my guilt, for it is great.

**Psalm 31:3**

For you are my rock and my fortress;  
and *for your name's sake* you lead me and guide me;

**Psalm 79:9**

Help us, O God of our salvation,  
for the glory of your name;  
deliver us, and atone for our sins,  
*for your name's sake!*

**Psalm 106:8**

Yet he saved them *for his name's sake*,  
that he might make known his mighty power.

**Psalm 109:21**

But you, O God my Lord,  
deal on my behalf *for your name's sake*;  
because your steadfast love is good, deliver me!

**Psalm 143:11**

*For your name's sake*, O LORD, preserve my life!  
In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!

**Isaiah 48:9, 11**

*For my name's sake* I defer my anger,  
for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you,  
that I may not cut you off. . . .  
*For my own sake, for my own sake*, I do it,  
for how should my name be profaned?  
My glory I will not give to another.

**Ezekiel 20:9**

But I acted *for the sake of my name*, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt.

**Ezekiel 20:14**

But I acted *for the sake of my name*, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out.

**Ezekiel 20:22**

But I withheld my hand and acted *for the sake of my name*, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out.

**Ezekiel 20:44**

And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you *for my name's sake*, not according to your evil ways, nor according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.

**Ezekiel 36:22**

Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but *for the sake of my holy name*, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.

**Ezekiel 39:25**

Therefore, thus says the Lord God, "Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name.

*The New Testament also uses this language, with Jesus frequently applying it to his own name:*

**Matthew 10:22**

. . . and you will be hated by all *for my name's sake*. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

**Matthew 19:29**

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, *for my name's sake*, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

**Matthew 24:9**

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations *for my name's sake*.

**Acts 9:16**

For I will show him how much he must suffer *for the sake of my name*.

**Romans 1:5**

through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith *for the sake of his name* among all the nations.

**1 John 2:12**

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven *for his name's sake*.