

29. Learning Why the Prophets Said Israel Was Blinded

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why God chose to show His mercy to all of us who repented of our sin and placed our faith in Christ. We saw several illustrations of the fact that people were shown mercy even though they deserved judgment. Today, God continues to show His mercy. That is a fact for which each of us who have placed our faith in Christ can be thankful. Today, we are going to see why the prophets of God said that the people of Israel had been blinded.

In our last topic, we saw that God is God both of the Jews and also of the Gentiles. In our topic today, we are going to see that God said through the prophets that God has also blinded the nation of Israel for a period of time. We begin first with a quotation from the book of Hosea. In Romans 9:25-26, we read, “As He says also in Hosea: ‘I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, “you are not My people,” there they shall be called sons of the living God.’” In the book of Hosea, we see that three children were born to Hosea and his wife. These children were given names that told what God was going to soon do to the nation of Israel.

The first child was called “Jezreel”, because God said that He would soon bring judgment on the nation of Israel and cause Israel to be defeated in the Valley of Jezreel. The second child was named “Lo-Ruhamah” which means *unpitied* because God would show no pity when He judged Israel. The third child was called “Lo-ammi”. Hosea 1:9 says, “Then *God* said: ‘Call his name Lo-Ammi, for you *are* not My people, and I will not be your *God*.’” Here, God warned the nation of Israel that the time would soon come when they would be judged with spiritual blindness. This spiritual blindness came on the nation of Israel very soon and later also came on the nation of Judah. If God would have said nothing more, it would have looked like there was no future for either Israel or Judah.

However, Hosea 1:10 says, “‘Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, “You *are* not My people,” *there* it shall be said to them, “You *are* sons of the living God.’”” Then, Hosea 2:23 adds, “‘Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on *her who had* not obtained mercy; then I will say to *those who were* not My people, “You *are* My people!” And they shall say, “You *are* my God!’”” Here, we see that God also promised Israel and later Judah that He would one day restore the Jews to a place of blessing. That time is still future and has not happened yet. The fact that God used Hosea to speak of both the judgment of Israel and the future blessing of Israel shows that Israel will only be blinded for a period of time.

God also gave this same warning of judgment through Isaiah. Romans 9:27-29 says, “Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel (Isaiah spoke to the southern part of Israel called Judah): ‘Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth.’ And as Isaiah said before: ‘Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.’” God used Isaiah to

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compare the number of people in Israel to the sand of the seashore because there were so many people. Isaiah 10:22-23 says, “For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, a remnant of them will return; the destruction decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord GOD of hosts will make a determined end in the midst of all the land.” Here, we see that God said through Isaiah that only a small remnant of that once great nation of Israel would be saved.

Then, in Isaiah 1:9, the once great nation of Israel was compared to two other cities. That verse says, “Unless the LORD of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah.” The only people that escaped the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah were Lot and his two daughters because the Lord had mercy and brought them out of the city before He destroyed those cities. Here, we see that God used Isaiah to help the southern kingdom of Israel, which had been renamed Judah, realize that judgment would also come on them except for the small remnant that God preserved.

As we see from these quotations from Hosea and Isaiah, God did bring judgment on the Jews and spiritual blindness for a period of time so that God could show mercy to the Gentiles. However, that spiritual blindness was the result of their own sin because they refused to believe the message of salvation and forgiveness of sin and tried to be saved by their own works. That is why Romans 9:30-31 says, “What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness.” As Gentiles, we were not looking for God.

We were not trying to be right with God. In fact, Romans 3:19-20 says, “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.” In fact, as Gentiles, we were all guilty before God because of our sin. We were not trying to find a way to be righteous in the sight of God. In spite of this failure to seek God and His righteousness, God brought the message of salvation to us as Gentiles. In fact, Paul quoted from Isaiah 65:1 when he said in Romans 10:20, “But Isaiah is very bold and says: ‘I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.’” As Gentiles, we were not looking for God but God still sent Christ to die for our sins as well as for the sins of the Jews.

In contrast, Israel was trying to make itself right with God by pursuing the law. In the time of Christ, the Pharisees thought they were right with God because they did try to keep the law. In Luke 18, Christ gave a parable about the prayers of a Pharisee and a tax collector. Those prayers are recorded in Luke 18:11-13 where we read, “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’” And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” Here, we see that the Pharisee thought that he was righteous because of the things that he was doing. Christ said just the opposite was true. Christ declared the tax collector righteous while also saying that the Pharisee would be brought down. The Jews could

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not receive the righteousness of God by their own efforts.

Romans 9:32-33 goes on to explain why the Jews could not receive the righteousness of God, “Why? Because *they did* not *seek it* by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’” The Jews could not receive the righteousness of God because they did not seek that righteousness by faith. Galatians 2:16 says, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” The Jews tried to be justified by keeping the Old Testament law. However, they could not be justified because they did not keep the law perfectly.

Salvation by faith was like a stumbling stone to the Jews and they stumbled at that stumbling stone. Isaiah had explained the choice that each of the Jews had to make hundreds of years before Christ came to this earth. Isaiah 8:13-14 says, “‘The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; *let Him be* your fear, and *let Him be* your dread. He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.’” In these verses, we see that Isaiah said Christ would be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both of the houses of Israel. This meant that most of the people of both Israel and Judah would reject Christ at His first coming.

That stone is explained in Isaiah 28:16 where we read, “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.’” Ephesians 2:19-20 tells us, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner *stone*.” Then, Paul adds in 1 Corinthians 3:11, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Christ is the One who is the precious cornerstone and the sure foundation.

We have the privilege of helping our physical and spiritual children understand the fact that the Lord has given them the great opportunity to explain to others how they can make Christ the foundation for their lives. Our children will experience great joy as they see the Lord work through their lives as the Lord causes their lives to have a growing impact in the lives of others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children develop a growing ministry as they share the Gospel of Christ with others.