

Jehovah-M'Kaddesh

⁷ “Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the Lord your God. ⁸ Keep my statutes and do them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you.” – Leviticus 20:7-8 ESV

YHWH-M'Kaddesh – The LORD Who Sanctifies, Makes Holy.” The key to understanding this name of God lies in its association with the Hebrew term, *qāḏaš* (קָדַשׁ) which, according to the *Outline of Biblical Usage* carries the following meanings: “to consecrate, sanctify, prepare, dedicate, be hallowed, be holy, be sanctified, be separate.”

In verse 7, God commands the Israelites to “consecrate” (*qāḏaš*) themselves. The purpose for their consecration is their holiness; they are to “be holy” (*qāḏôš*). This is the adjective form of the root word *qāḏaš* and describes their set apart or sacred status as God’s chosen people. They are called to live ceremonially and morally different lives than those of every other people group on earth because they belong to God. They are His children and should reflect His holy character through adherence to His holy law.

But in this passage, God reminds His chosen people that their set-apart status is not the byproduct of law-keeping. In other words, they don’t earn their holiness through obedience or strict adherence to a set of religious rules or rituals. He states, “I am the Lord who sanctifies (*qāḏaš*) you.” God had already chosen them as His own and that distinction had nothing to do with their behavior. In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses informed the people of Israel, whom God had recently released from captivity in Egypt, that they belonged to Him.

*“For you are a holy (*qāḏôš*) people, who belong to the LORD your God. Of all the people on earth, the LORD your God has chosen you to be his own special treasure.*

“The LORD did not set his heart on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations! Rather, it was simply that the LORD loves you, and he was keeping the oath he had sworn to your ancestors.” – Deuteronomy 7:6-8 NLT

Moses states that they were *already* holy in God’s eyes and it had nothing to do with their adherence to the law. So, their set-apart status had nothing to do with their behavior. God’s rescue of them from captivity in Egypt had not been the result of their worthiness or some form of reward for their righteous character. It wasn’t even because they were a mighty and powerful nation that could prove beneficial to God’s plans. In fact, Moses states that their size and significance had nothing to do with their selection by God. Yahweh had chosen them as His special treasure, even though they “were the smallest of nations” (Deuteronomy 7:7 NLT).

But the Leviticus passage conveys God’s expectation that the Israelites live in keeping with their status as His special treasure. Their behavior was to match their identity as His chosen ones. They were *already* holy because God had hand-picked them; now they were to live like it. That’s why God tells them, “Keep my statutes and do them” (Leviticus 20:8 ESV). This was not

an option but a command. Yahweh was communicating His non-negotiable expectation of His chosen people. They were to live as who they were as His treasured possession. Moses went on to tell the Israelites that their obedience to God's laws was binding and not up for debate.

"...you must obey all these commands, decrees, and regulations I am giving you today."
– Deuteronomy 7:11 NLT

Yet, their obedience to God's law could not make them holy. Only God could do that. Their adherence to the law was proof of their set-apart status. It gave evidence of their standing as His treasure possession because the law had been given to them alone. It was God's way of differentiating the Israelites from every other nation on earth. The law was intended to be God's code of conduct for regulating their actions and attitudes as His people. It was the key to *being* holy. If the Israelites had been allowed to live just like all the other nations, there would have been no tangible difference between them. But God's people were to live holy, set-apart lives that made them distinctively different from the rest of the nations on earth.

But the Israelites had a difficult time living up to their holy identity. According to God, they *were* holy, but they found it virtually impossible to maintain the standard God had given them. Over the centuries, they repeatedly failed to obey God's law, choosing instead to compromise their convictions and blend in with the nations around them. This did not make them any less holy or set apart in God's eyes. In fact, it caused Him to punish them for bringing shame and dishonor to His name. They ended up in captivity again, this time in Assyria and Babylon. But the Book of Ezekiel prophesies about a future day when God will restore Israel because they remain His treasured possession. He is *YHWH-M'Kaddesh*, The LORD who makes holy.

"...they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." – Ezekiel 7:24-27 ESV

God had called the people of Israel. He had set them apart and, in doing so, made them holy in His eyes. But He expected them to live in keeping with their identity as His children. He provided them with His law so they would know what holiness looked like in everyday life. Their relationship with Him came with rules. Their unmerited status as His chosen possession came with conditions and expectations. That's why God commanded them to "be holy." They were to display their identity through obedience to His commands.

But look closely at Ezekiel 7:24. Despite their failure to faithfully carry out God's commands, the day is coming when God will see that they do. He confidently declares, "They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes." Their conduct will line up with their status as His holy people. Their character will reflect their consecrated state as His treasured possession. He will make it happen. Jehovah-M'Kaddesh will ensure that His people are positionally and practically holy in every way.

The apostle Paul picks up on this theme in his first letter to the church in Corinth.

*Think about the circumstances of your call, brothers and sisters. Not many were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were born to a privileged position. But God chose what the world thinks foolish to shame the wise, and God chose what the world thinks weak to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, what is regarded as nothing, to set aside what is regarded as something, so that no one can boast in his presence. He is the reason you have a relationship with Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "**Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.**" – 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 NLT*

Notice that Paul reminds the Corinthians that they too were called by God. He chose them, not the other way around, and His choice of them had nothing to do with their wisdom, power, or status. They had done nothing to deserve their calling. In fact, Paul states that they were foolish, weak, low, and despised. In the world's eyes, they were regarded as nothing. Even their relationship with Jesus had been God's doing.

He [God] is the reason you have a relationship with Christ Jesus. – 1 Corinthians 1:30 NLT

God had called them and set them apart. He is the one who set them apart as His own.

God is faithful, by whom you were called into fellowship with his son, Jesus Christ our Lord. – 1 Corinthians 1:9 NLT

Paul echoes this wonderful reality in his letter to the Romans.

For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing with himself. And having given them right standing, he gave them his glory. – Romans 8:29-30 NLT

God is Jehovah-M'Kaddesh, the one who sanctifies and sets apart. It is He who makes our salvation and sanctification possible.

So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters. – Hebrews 2:11 NLT

Through His death on the cross, Jesus made our holiness possible. He paid the price for our sins, dying the death we deserved to die, so that we might be restored to a right relationship with our holy Father.

But when this priest had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right hand of God, where he is now waiting until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet. For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy. – Hebrews 11:12-14 NLT

We *are* holy but we are also becoming progressively more holy. It is an ongoing process that requires our willing reliance upon God's Spirit and our faithful obedience to His will for our lives. The apostle Peter gives us the recipe for living holy lives as we wait for the return of Christ.

So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy." – 1 Peter 1:13-16 NLT

God is Jehovah-M'Kaddesh, the one who sanctifies, but we also have a role to play and we wait for the completion of His sanctifying process in our lives: The glorification of our bodies. We cannot make ourselves holy; only God can do that, and He has chosen to do it through the sacrificial death of His Son. But we can exhibit our holy standing by living as God's obedient children through the indwelling power of the Spirit and the guidance of His Word.