

EZEKIEL: BLOSSOMING DURING LIFE'S MOST SEVERE CRISES

Part VII: God's Work To Counter Extensive Theological Error

(Ezekiel 18:1-32)

I. Introduction

- A. Throughout the history of the world, the cause for theological truth has been pitted against the spread of deep and expansive error. Today, evolution is propagated in our public schools in diametric opposition to the clear assertions of Genesis 1, and political platforms abound in incredible opposition to Biblical stands on the sanctity of life, the uprightness of heterosexual marriage and a host of other issues. Even theological debates in Evangelical Christian circles can discourage.
- B. The believer can feel so inundated by this massive error that he feels like giving up his discipling efforts.
- C. Ezekiel was no stranger to such feelings of futility. God gave him direction in facing this overwhelming crisis in his own people in Ezekiel 18:1-32.

II. God's Work To Counter Extensive Theological Error, Ezekiel 18:1-32.

- A. When Ezekiel ministered among the captive Hebrews in Babylon, the Lord informed him that a great theological error existed back in Israel, Ez. 18:1-2.
 1. There was a troublesome proverb circulating about in the land of Israel, Ez. 18:1-2a.
 2. The false idea being promoted was that God would judge the **children** for the sins of their **fathers**, Ezekiel 18:2b.
- B. God promised that HE would make sure that this proverb would cease in Israel, Ez. 18:3.
- C. Then, to detail the error involved in this error, God went into detail to expose the error, Ez. 18:4-32:
 1. God declared that He owned the souls of all men regardless of the generation represented, 18:4a.
 2. God thus held each person **individually** responsible to **Himself** regarding sin and righteousness rewards from Him, Ez. 18:4b.
 3. Then God presented possible scenarios to make His truth even clearer to us, Ez. 18:5-18:
 - a. Illustration One: The Case of the Godly Man - If a man is totally upright in his life and dealings with others before God, God will surely live in blessing in accord to the Mosaic Covenant (18:5-9).
 - b. Illustration Two: The Case of the Godless Son of a Godly Man - If that godly man begets a son who repudiates the godliness of his father, and turns his back on God's righteousness, God will slay that son in judgment in according to His Mosaic Covenant, Ez. 18:10-13.
 - c. Illustration Three: The Case of the Godly GRANDSON of a Godly Man whose SON is Godless - Just to cover the bases, God presents the **third** generation of this ongoing saga: if the son of this godless son of a godly man turns out to be godly, God will honor this third generation offspring like He honored his grandfather--with blessing in accord with the Mosaic Covenant, Ez. 18:14-17. However, the **second** generation man who was evil--in spite of the blessing given to his father and to his son--will die because of his **individual** sin, Ez. 18:18.
 4. God then repeats the position He is asserting on individual accountability to the Lord, Ez. 18:19-30.
 5. Finally, God's basic compassion is laid bare as He calls for sinners to repent so He won't have to do what He does not like to do--to judge people in wrath, Ez. 18:31-32.

Lesson: God is the One Who effectively tackles theological error in the world, cf. Acts 17:26-27 with Romans 1:18-20. Our part is simply to heed God's input, Ez. 18:1-32.

Some Applications: (1) The claim that Ex. 20:5 teaches divine judgment on three generations for the sins of the first one overlooks the cultural reality that three generations lived together under a single tent (B. K. Waltke, Class Notes, DTS, '76) . Each generation was guilty for the sin of cover-up even if only the first generation did the original offense, cf. Josh. 7:21,24f. Ex. 20:5 is compatible with Ez. 18. (2) We cannot baptize infants to secure their salvation based on the godliness of their parents! God has no grandchildren--only sons! Ez. 18:20b NIV says, "The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him."