

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious Part XIX: God's Individual Dealings With Man On Judgment (Ezekiel 18:1-32)

I. Introduction

- A. When God in Exodus 20:5 said He visited "the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me," some think He meant that He punishes the children for their fathers' sins.
- B. This belief also existed in Israel in Ezekiel's day and it circulated in the form of a proverb, a belief God strongly opposed in Ezekiel 18:1-32. We view this passage for insight and application (as follows):

II. God's Individual Dealings With Man On Judgment, Ezekiel 18:1-32.

- A. God spoke to Ezekiel, asking what the people of Israel meant by the proverb they were circulating that, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," Ezekiel 18:1-2 KJV. To clarify, this proverb taught that the fathers had sinned (eating sour grapes), and the children were facing divine judgment for their fathers' sins (the children's teeth are set on edge).
- B. The Lord took an oath, swearing by Himself as the Eternal God Who lived, vowing that this proverb would no longer be used by the people in Israel and thereby indicating His great opposition to it, Ezekiel 18:3.
- C. God then gave an opposing clarification of His dealings with individuals in judging them, Ezekiel 18:4-20:
 - 1. The Lord explained that all souls belonged to Him, be it that of the father or that of the son, Ezekiel 18:4a.
 - 2. Accordingly, God determined that the individual that sinned would die for his own sins, Ezekiel 18:4b.
 - 3. God then presented the various cases that could occur and applied this principle to them, Ezekiel 18:5-18:
 - a. The Lord declared that if a righteous man did what was right (v. 5-9a), he would surely live, v. 9b.
 - b. However, God added that if this righteous man sired a wicked son, that son would surely die, v. 10-13.
 - c. Were a sinful father to sire a son who refused to practice his father's sins (v. 14-17a), that son would not die for his father's sins, but be kept alive by God, v. 17b. However, the sinful father would die, v. 18.
 - 4. Nevertheless, the people of Israel asked why the son should not suffer for the father's sins (v. 19a), to which God answered that He would bless the son and not punish him for his own acts of righteousness, v. 19b. The individual soul that sinned would die, meaning the son would not suffer for the sins of the father nor the father suffer for the sins of the son: God would reckon the righteousness of the righteous to that righteous man and God would also reckon the wickedness of the wicked to that wicked one, Ezekiel 18:20.
- D. Then, revealing His great grace, God added that were a wicked person to turn from his wickedness to practice righteousness, he would not die, but surely live, Ezekiel 18:21. Indeed, with his repentant life, the Lord would not even reckon against him the sins he had previously committed since the sinner's repentance followed by upright living would be rewarded by God Who would grant the repentant man life, Ezekiel 18:22.
- E. God explained that He had no pleasure in the death of even the wicked, but earnestly desired that the wicked repent and turn from his sin unto righteousness, Ezekiel 18:23.
- F. However, were a righteous person to turn from his righteousness and practice evil, the Lord would not remember his former righteous deeds to deliver him from punishment, but God would slay him for his treacherous turn away from righteousness to practice a life of sin, Ezekiel 18:24.
- G. Yet, the people of Israel were claiming that the way of the Lord was not just (v. 25a), and the Lord answered this charge by defending His way and calling the way of the people of Israel unjust, Ezekiel 18:25b.
- H. Accordingly, God summarized His just dealings with all individuals in Israel, Ezekiel 18:26-28:
 - 1. The Lord asserted that if a righteous person turns from righteousness to practice sin, he would die, v. 26.
 - 2. God then added that if a sinner turned from sin to do righteousness, he would save his life, for he had considered his way and repented so that God would reward him by keeping him alive, Ezek. 18:27-28.
- I. The Lord then critiqued the people of Israel for wrongly misrepresenting His dealings with them, v. 29.
- J. God finally applied this extended explanation to the people of Israel, urging them to repent and gain a new heart, asking why should they die by continuing to sin, for God had no pleasure in destroying them, v. 30-32.

Lesson: *God countered the view that children suffer the judgment of God for their fathers' sins, for He deals with every individual according to his own actions. Thus, God's punishment in Exodus 20:5 is on all who hate God, including those who hate Him in the third and fourth generation when they adopt their fathers' hatred of God!*

Application: *God deals out punishment and reward on an INDIVIDUAL basis, so may we EACH live uprightly!*