

“IS IT NOT MY WAYS WHICH ARE FAIR?”

Ezekiel 18

Introduction

- 1) **Ezekiel** is a prophet of God sent to the Jewish captives in Babylon (593-571 BC)
 - a) Judah had been taken into Babylonian captivity (Ezekiel taken in deportation of 597 BC)
- 2) God questions the popular proverb of the day: **“The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge”** (vv. 1-3)
 - a) The Jewish captives thought they were being punished for sins of their fathers – an *accusation of unfairness* against God!
- 3) God refutes this false proverb by teaching the individual responsibility of each person

I) **The Principle of Individual Responsibility (v. 4)**

- A) “The soul who sins shall die” – each individual is responsible for his own sins (v. 4; cf. Deut. 24:16; Jer. 31:29-30; Rom. 6:23)
 - 1) Each person will be judged according to his own works (Rom. 2:6; 2 Cor. 5:10)
 - 2) Righteousness or wickedness is not transferable; each person is responsible for their lives

II) **The Principle Illustrated (vv. 5-20)**

- A) Examples of three men: *a just man, an unjust son, and a just grandson* (vv. 5-18)
- B) **First man** (vv. 5-9)
 - 1) Just man who did what was lawful and right according to God’s will
 - 2) Judged according to his own deeds (cf. 1 Jn. 3:7)
- C) **Second man** [son of first man] (vv. 10-13)
 - 1) Unjust man who is personally responsible – “his blood shall be upon *him*”
 - 2) His just father not held guilty for son’s sins
- D) **Third man** [son of second man; grandson of first man] (vv. 14-17)
 - 1) Just man who decided not to be like his unjust father (each person makes their own individual choice to do good or evil)
 - 2) Not punished for the iniquity of his father – responsible only for his own actions
 - 3) His father will be punished for his own sins – the righteous son will not be held guilty for his father’s sins (vv. 18-20)

III) **The Possibility of Change and Its Consequences (vv. 21-30a)**

- A) The wicked or the righteous can change their ways (vv. 21-24)
 - 1) Wicked can repent and do right – God will not hold past sins against him
 - 2) Righteous can turn away from righteousness and commit sin – will be guilty of sin
- B) Judgment of God is fair and impartial – sin is punished and faithfulness rewarded (vv. 25-29)
 - 1) Each individual will be judged “according to his ways” (v. 30a; cf. 2 Cor. 5:10)
 - 2) God: **“Is it not my ways which are fair?”**

IV) **The Need for the Sinner to Change (vv. 30b-32)**

- A) The sinner needs to repent and turn from all his transgressions – God will forgive!
 - 1) Get a new heart and a new spirit – trust in God and obey His word (cf. 11:19-20)
- B) Why the sinner needs to change
 - 1) Why should you die? (salvation is available!); God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (God does not want anyone to perish; cf. Ezek. 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9)

Conclusion

Each one of us will be judged individually: *“In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him”* (Acts 10:34-35). Hear God and heed His invitation: *“Therefore turn and live!”*