

May 23, 2021

“Preaching To The Exiles”
Lesson 12 of Unit

Ezekiel 18:1-9, 30-32

Intro

In this week's lesson passage, the exiles seem to be putting the blame on their parents and previous generations for the difficulties the nation of Israel is currently facing. They claim their own innocence. But God reminds them of the need to examine one's own life to make sure it matches up to what God has called His people to be like.

Ezekiel is a prophet called during the reign of King Jehoiachin, who reigned for only three months in 597 BC before the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem. Ezekiel as well as many others were taken as captives and deported to Babylon. This passage occurs five years after Jehoiachin is deposed, and shows God's message through Ezekiel to His people living under Babylonian captivity.

Read Ezekiel 18:1-9

1. vs. 1: The phrase “The word of the Lord came to me”

Commonly used by prophets

Establishes that God has given the prophet these words; not the prophet's words

The phrase is used more in this book than in any other Bible book

This shows that God did not abandon His people while in exile

He speaks to and through Ezekiel to them

Reassures the people that He is still with them

2. vs. 2: The proverb “The parents eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge”

It means, “The fathers (parents) sin, the children suffer”

The exiles are years into their captivity

They are trying to understand how this came about, who is responsible

This proverb shows their conclusions—

We are the innocent victims; our parents did wrong, and we suffer for it

This idea is partly true—sins of one generation have a big impact on the next

In Ezek. 16, the prophet points out that many generations have sinned

They have all been unfaithful to the covenant

The complaining generation has forgotten their how their sins have contributed to being exiled

3. vs. 3: God says that this proverb won't be used in Israel anymore

The generation using it is to acknowledge their own part in the nation's sins

By extension, they aren't to blame God for the captivity they now endure

4. vs. 4: Part 1: Everyone belongs to God

This means everyone: the Babylonians as well as the Israelites

He is the sovereign Creator, so all belong to Him

Part 2: The one who sins will die

One group of Israelites is complaining that they are receiving unjust punishment
God reminds them that all people belong to Him
He then reminds them that the one who sins will receive his just punishment
The nation of Israel has been taken captive by Babylon
Therefore, all the people taken captive have sinned

5. vs. 5: A hypothetical situation is being set up, which will be developed from here through vs. 9

The hypothetical man is “righteous” who does “what is just and right”
Interestingly, the Hebrew words translated “righteous”, “just” and “right” occur in the
same verse only 2 times in the whole Bible: here and in Jer. 23:5

6. vs. 6: He does not eat at the mountain shrines

This says that he doesn’t practice idolatry in his worship
The shrines for false idols were found in the “high places” (the mountains)
This man doesn’t worship idols; he only worships God (See Ex. 20 / 10 commandments)
These exiles are now in Babylon, far from the “high places” of the mountain shrines
There are many false gods worshipped in Babylon
It might be a temptation to turn to these idols, since they are unsure about God’s
continuing to care for and about them

He keeps himself morally pure

He does not commit adultery with his neighbor’s wife (Ex. 20:14)
He does not have relations with his wife when she is having her period (Lev. 15:19-33)
Various reasons are suggested for why this may have been commanded
The bottom line is that since it is commanded, he obeys what God says

7. vs. 7: He deals rightly with others

He treats others lovingly in regards to economics
He pays back what he has borrowed
He gives food and clothing to those who need it
Dealing rightly is more than just not doing harm to others (committing robbery)
It also calls for one to actively seek ways to do good to and for others
These concepts are present within the Law of Moses
However, this man is concerned with doing right because it is right, not just
because it is found in the law.

8. vs. 8: His actions toward others are rooted in justice and fairness

He doesn’t charge interest on money lent
This is forbidden in the law for any loan given to an Israelite
It is allowed to charge interest to a foreigner, but under rules (Deut. 23:19-20)
He makes sure that none of his actions could do wrong to another
He judges fairly when called to help settle a dispute

9. vs. 9: He follows what God says, keeping His laws faithfully

All the things done by this man in vs. 6-8 show him to be a righteous man

Because of his actions, God declares him as righteous as well

“He will live” says God

This shows that God is pleased, and will not visit punishment on this man

Read Ezekiel 18:30-32

10. vs. 30-31: God announces to the people how He sees the status of their guilt

Though he has pronounced punishment on the nation, resulting in captivity

“You Israelites”

He now reminds them that each person is responsible for their own sins

Each person is going to be judged on their individual walk with God

“Each of you according to your own ways”

He tells them to individually repent and turn from their offenses

This follows what God has always said about sin

People get right with God individually first, then the nation will be right

This is God’s answer to the people’s complaint earlier (see vs. 2)

The people need to look at their own behaviors, not the ones of their
Ancestors

He also tells them to get “a new heart and a new spirit”

If they repent and seek God, they are seeking a new heart and spirit

If they do this, God will be merciful to forgive and restore them

“Why will you die?” is a rhetorical question

This shows that God is giving them a chance to repent and change

The worst case isn’t a foregone conclusion

11. vs. 32: God is the Creator of all things; how can he be pleased to destroy any of it?

He urges them to “repent and live!”

If they do, they will have spiritual life and not die

Application: The exiles God is talking to in this passage are not unique. They think they’ve gotten a punishment that was someone else’s fault. They thought of themselves as being morally better than the previous generations of God’s people. Jesus reminded the Pharisees of His day that they thought of themselves in the same way in Matthew 23. The Pharisees believed they would not have murdered the prophets of former days, as their fathers did. Yet they were plotting Jesus’ death at the time. They weren’t as different as they thought they were.

People’s hearts are always capable of fooling themselves, and also of not obeying God fully. So God asks us to once again, day after day, examine ourselves and repent of the sins we have committed that keep us from full obedience to Him. This is what He asked of the people in Ezekiel’s day, and what He calls us to do today.

Prayer: Father God, we recognize that we fail to live up to Your plans and goals for our lives, despite our best efforts to follow You. We ask forgiveness for where we have sinned, and mercy and grace as we repent and seek to follow You more closely. In Jesus' name, Amen.