

GOD JUDGES SIN

TEXT: EZEKIEL 18:4, 20, 23, 24, 30-32

INTRODUCTION:

1. The prophet Ezekiel was taken away into captivity by the Babylonians during the reign of King Jehoiachin. It was about 595 years before Christ (Scofield).
2. Ezekiel was young man at the time, and his was a very difficult ministry. For one thing, he was far from home in a heathen country. Secondly, the false prophets kept telling the captives that they would soon return to Jerusalem and that the city would not be destroyed.
3. But Ezekiel knew they wrong. God allowed the Babylonians to vex His people because of their sin.
4. The false prophets kept preaching a "Don't worry, be happy message." We have a lot of these fellows around today. The prophet Isaiah called them "dumb dogs, they cannot bark" (Isa.56:10).
5. These false prophets, these dumb dogs, said Jerusalem would not be destroyed. The prophet Jeremiah, a contemporary of Ezekiel, preached that Jerusalem indeed would be destroyed.
6. In 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar and his army came and destroyed Jerusalem. They destroyed the temple, and they burned the city to the ground.
7. Amid all of this sin and disaster, Ezekiel preached to a sinful and indifferent people. They simply would not listen to Ezekiel just as they would not listen to Jeremiah, and they would not listen to Isaiah.
8. The book of Ezekiel is a sad book. It is a sad book because it is written to a sinful people rooted out of their land, their beloved city destroyed, their king blinded, their princes killed, and many of their women ravished in a cruel heathen country, far from home.
9. And they had brought all of this upon themselves because of their sin. Oh, if they would only listen to the prophet Ezekiel.
10. If only people today would listen as well!

I. THERE IS A PENALTY FOR SIN (18:4b).

1. Many Jews had misunderstood Exodus 20:5b and 34:7. Exodus 20:5 says the LORD is a jealous God, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" of them that hate Him.

2. Exodus 34:7 is similar. It says God visits "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."
3. Therefore, the people in Ezekiel's day thought they were suffering for the sins of their fathers. And by doing this they were denying their own guilt.
4. They refused to repent and get right with God. They did not see themselves as guilty sinners. Ezekiel 18:4 and 18:20 says, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."
5. People like to blame their parents for their sins, but the Bible says, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezekiel 18:20).
6. A proverb became popular among the Jews (Ezek.18:2).
7. Jeremiah 31:29 says that when the LORD is finished judging the Israelites for their sins, "They shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge."
8. What they meant by this proverb is that their forefathers had committed sin but they themselves were innocent.
9. This unscriptural thinking was a delusion, a wicked invention to sustain them in their lost, sinful condition. They were actually dulling their sense of individual responsibility for their sins and the just judgment due them.
10. It is amazing how some sinners twist the Bible in order to justify their sin. I have had sinners say to me, "It's all Adam's fault! He got us in this mess!" No, my friend – you cannot blame Adam because you yourself have sinned over and over again and God holds you responsible for your sin.
11. Men suffer for Adam's sin, but no man is punished for Adam's sin. Men are punished for their own sins (Ezek. 18:4, 20).
12. The LORD told the Israelites to stop using this proverb because it implies that God is unfair (Ezek.18:3; cf. 18:25, 29).
13. They were being punished for their own sins, and if the sins of the fathers come upon the children, it is only because oftentimes the children followed after the wickedness of their fathers.
14. Children do have a tendency to repeat the sins of their fathers, but it does not have to be that way. The blood of Jesus Christ can break any bondage to sin.

15. I have seen this time and time again: A drunken dad has a few sons, some of his sons become drunkards but some will not touch alcohol. Or an adulterous dad has two sons: one turns out to be immoral like his father but the other is a happily married man, faithful to his wife.
16. They say the apple does not fall far from the tree, but thank God sometimes it falls far away from the tree.
17. Some of the most wicked kings had godly children, and visa versa. Study it out some time. Ahaz was a wicked unbeliever, and his son Hezekiah was a saved man, the best king Judah ever had.
18. And who was Hezekiah's son? Wicked Manasseh.
19. So what God is telling them here is not a new doctrine. The LORD is telling them they just misunderstood the old doctrine. They just did not properly understand the Word of God.
20. Deuteronomy 24:16 says, "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (cf. II Kings 14:6).
21. And many people today still misinterpret the Word of God. For example, some churches teach "generational curses." This is foolishness.
22. It does not matter what your father did or your grandfather or your great, great grandfather, etc. If you repent and receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour, God will save you.

***Come, every soul by sin oppressed;
There's mercy with the Lord,
And He will surely give you rest
By trusting in His Word.***

***Only trust Him, only trust Him,
Only trust Him now;
He will save you, He will save you,
He will save you now.***

***For Jesus shed His precious blood
Rich blessings to bestow;
Plunge now into the crimson flood***

That washes white as snow. -- John H. Stockton, Ira D. Sankey

23. Each man must answer for his own sin. God keeps accurate records. Moses warned, "behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23).

24. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek.18:4,20). Many people fear death. An old man read an article in the newspaper that said 81% of people die in their bed. So ever since he read that article he has been sleeping on the floor.
25. Another man said, "I wish I knew the place where I am going to die."
26. His friend asked, "Why is that?"
27. The man said, "If I knew, I'd avoid going to that place."
28. When the Bible says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" let us look at it, not in the context of the Mosaic law, but in the progressive revelation of the New Testament. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).
29. In this context, it is not just physical death, but what the Bible calls "the second death" (Rev. 20:14, 15).
30. There is a penalty for sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek.18:4). "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
31. What a contrast – death or eternal life; wages or free gift. Which will you choose?

II. GOD TAKES NO PLEASURE IN JUDGING SINNERS (18:23, 32).

1. Jesus said, "And ye will not come to me that ye might have life" (John 5:40).
2. Sinners need to understand the tender compassion of God.
3. Sinners have brought upon themselves misery and woe.
4. Sinners have hardened themselves against God's love and mercy.
5. Sinners have sinned against God's holiness and God's grace.
6. And yet God tenderly pleads with each and every hell-deserving sinner to "return from his ways and live" (Ezek. 18:23).
7. Jonathan Edwards, in his famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," said, "Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable."
8. God takes no pleasure in judging sinners. The Bible says God "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9; cf. Ezekiel 18:30-32).
9. Isaiah 28:21 says judgment is God's "strange work...His strange act."
10. Have you ever read about the conversion of Billy Sunday, the great evangelist? He was a well-known baseball player before he was saved.

11. One Sunday afternoon, Billy Sunday was walking around the streets of Chicago with a few baseball friends. Some workers from the Pacific Garden Mission were holding a meeting in a vacant lot. Billy and his friends stopped to listen to the music and the preaching.
12. The Gospel songs brought back precious childhood memories for Billy Sunday and soon he was crying uncontrollably. One man from the Mission said, "We're going back to the Mission. Won't you come? I'm sure you'll enjoy it."
13. Billy Sunday told his friends he was going to the Mission to get saved, but the other men would not go. Some of them laughed and mocked.
14. One friend offered encouragement but would not go himself. Some never said a word. Billy Sunday got saved that day at the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. He went on to become one of the greatest preachers of the 20th century.
15. One of the baseball players who refused to get saved that day was a catcher named Frank Flint. Flint caught balls before they had chest protectors, masks, and gloves. He caught the balls bare-handed and he broke every bone in the ball of his hand.
16. Every bone in his face was broken, and his nose and cheekbones, shoulder, and ribs had all been broken.
17. He became a heavy drinker and his drinking broke up his home. One night he staggered out of a bar, drunk and coughing uncontrollably. Blood was coming out his nose, mouth, and eyes. His wife found him out on the street and called two policemen and they rushed him into a cab to her boarding house.
18. The doctor came and said: "Frank, the end is near," and Frank said, "Send for Billy Sunday."
19. They called Billy Sunday and he rushed over. Frank Flint said, "There's nothing in life that I care for now. I can hear the people in the grandstands cheering, but it means nothing now."
20. His last words to Billy Sunday were, "If the Umpire calls me out now, Billy, won't you say a few words over me?"
21. Billy Sunday said later on, "The great Umpire of the universe yelled, 'You're out!' and Frank Flint was gone." Dead at the age of 36.
22. Billy Sunday would often tell the story of Frank Flint. He said, "He sat with me on the street corner with me, drunk, years ago in Chicago when I said, 'Good-bye, boys, I've had enough.'" But Frank Flint would not heed God's urgent exhortation. And he continued to drink. And he died and went to a drunkard's hell.

23. Beloved, God's urgent exhortation is an exhortation to repent. Isaiah 55:7 says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."
24. God takes no pleasure in judging sinners; God takes pleasure in saving sinners. I mentioned earlier that the book of Ezekiel is a sad book, but amid all the doom and gloom there are some wonderful promises (Ezek.36:24-27).
25. God promises "a new heart also will I give you" (36:26). We sometimes say, "Give your heart to the Lord," but He really doesn't want our dirty old hearts. He wants to give us a new heart. Have you received this new heart yet?
26. Have you been born again?
27. Have you ever wondered why our Lord said to Nicodemus, "Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?" (John 3:10).
28. As a "master of Israel," Nicodemus should have known Ezekiel 36:26, 27.

III. GOD WANTS SINNERS TO REPENT (18:30-32).

1. Some people say, "It's hard to live for God." Yes, it is hard when you try and do it in the flesh. Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).
2. And He said, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41).
3. The apostle Paul said, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18).
4. But when a man comes to the end of himself and realizes he is nothing without God, and that God would be perfectly just in casting him off into hell, then that man can call upon God and cry out to God and ask God to save him.
5. In other words, he must repent (Ezek.18:30-32).
6. The doctrine of repentance is taught all throughout the Bible. In the beginning of our New Testament, we are introduced to John the Baptist. And the very first word John preached was "Repent" (Matt. 3:1, 2).
7. This was the same message that our Lord preached (Matt. 4:17). And yet today most preachers will not preach repentance because they're scared some people won't like it.
8. Some people won't like it, and that's precisely why we must preach it. The only way unsaved people are going to get right with God is when

- they realize they are dirty rotten sinners who have sinned against a holy God and they recognize that they must repent of their sin.
9. If sinners do not repent and give up their sin they will not get truly saved (cf. Acts 20:21; 26:18-20; I Thess. 1:9).

CONCLUSION:

1. I read a story one time about a couple in Chicago long ago, whose daughter came down with an unusual disease. They heard about a specialist in Vienna, Austria and paid him \$25,000 (a lot of money back in those days) to treat their daughter.
2. There was another lady in the same part of town who read about this doctor in the newspaper and was very surprised because her daughter was afflicted with the same disease.
3. However, this woman could not afford the treatment. Yet she hoped that somehow, some way she might make contact with this doctor and that he could help her sick daughter get well again.
4. The doctor was an elderly man and in the habit of going for long walks every day. On this particular day it started raining very hard so he ran up the steps to a house to get out of the rain.
5. The lady who lived there saw him coming and slammed the door in his face. He stood there shivering for a few minutes in the pouring rain and within a few minutes his chauffeur pulled up in his limousine, ran out with an umbrella, escorted him into the car, and took him back to the hotel.
6. Back in those days people used to read the evening newspaper and the paper that night contained an article about the famous physician and how he caught a bad cold but a lady slammed her door in his face.
7. One lady reading the article was shocked. She was the lady who had slammed the door in the doctor's face. She also happened to be the poor lady with the sick daughter!
8. She ran all the way to the hotel to apologize to the doctor and try to explain and tell him about her daughter and beg him to come back to her house and treat her daughter, etc.
9. But when she finally arrived at the hotel she was informed that the doctor had already left for NYC, and from there he would get on a ship to take him back to Europe.
10. The woman broke down in the hotel lobby, lying on the floor crying out: "Oh my God! He was at my house and I would not let him in! He was at my front door and I shut the door in his face!"

11. She cried hysterically and would not stop screaming till an ambulance came and they took her to a mental hospital, where she stayed the rest of her life.
12. Perhaps some here today are not saved. Do not slam the door in God's face!
13. Hell will be so unbearable for those who slam the door in God's face. Our Lord said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).