

Pentwater Bible Church

Book of Ezekiel

Message 34

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Moses & The Brazen Serpent by Anthony Van Dyck Cir 1620

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Ezekiel
Message Thirty-Four

Personal Responsibility To God Pt. II

May 1, 2016

Daniel E. Woodhead

WE ARE ALL INDIVIDUALLY RESPONSIBLE TO GOD

Ezekiel 18:14-32

¹⁴Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins, which he hath done, and feareth, and doeth not such like; ¹⁵that hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbor's wife, ¹⁶neither hath wronged any, hath not taken aught to pledge, neither hath taken by robbery, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; ¹⁷that hath withdrawn his hand from the poor, that hath not received interest nor increase, hath executed mine ordinances, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live. ¹⁸As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, robbed his brother, and did that which is not good among his people, behold, he shall die in his iniquity.

¹⁹Yet say ye, Wherefore doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. ²⁰The soul that sinneth, it shall die: 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.

²¹But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. ²²None of his transgressions that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. ²³Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? saith the Lord Jehovah; and not rather that he should return from his way, and live? ²⁴But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? None of his righteous deeds that he hath done shall be remembered: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

²⁵Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel: Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? ²⁶When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth therein; in his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. ²⁷Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. ²⁸Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath

committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. ²⁹*Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?* ³⁰*Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord Jehovah. Return ye, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.* ³¹*Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* ³²*For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord Jehovah: wherefore turn yourselves, and live (ASV, 1901).*

THE SON WHO DOES NOT FOLLOW THE SINFUL FATHER

Ezekiel 18:14-16a

¹⁴*Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins, which he hath done, and feareth, and doeth not such like;* ¹⁵*that hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbor's wife,* ^{16a}*neither hath wronged any, hath not taken aught to pledge, neither hath taken by robbery (ASV, 1901).*

The Lord God is now going to provide the third of the three examples He began in the fifth verse of this chapter. The three examples are: (1) the righteous person who does “right” (vv. 5–9), (2) the wicked son of a righteous father (vv. 10–13), and (3) the righteous son of a wicked father (vv. 14–20). In this instance the Lord will not provide judgment to the offspring of a sinful man. This example here is one in which the son sees the father’s sins and does not follow him into sinful behavior. The father was openly brazen in his sins and obvious to all. He did not fear God so he continued in his wickedness oblivious to the impending judgment for the evil. In fact the son develops a godly fear which prevents him from pursuing the sins of the father. Six examples of sinful behavior contrary to God’s Laws are cited.

1. *That hath not eaten upon the mountains,* This is a reference to purposefully eating foods that were sacrificed to idols in recognition of the idol and making obeisance to it. They were having communion with the pagan gods through this “eating” of the sacrifices made to them. So not to eat as the righteous son is to keep free from idol worship. A Psalm affirms that the wicked actually ate the various sacrifices they made to their idol gods.

Psalm 106:28-29

²⁸*They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, And ate the sacrifices of the dead.* ²⁹*Thus they provoked him to anger with their doings; And the plague brake in upon them (ASV, 1901).*

2. *Neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel.* Lifting one’s eyes is to seriously and affectionately consider as stated in Isaiah 40:26 where the prophet says *that one should lift up our eyes on high to behold who hath created these things.* So here too the son does not look lovingly upon the idols as if they had special beauty, excellency or as if they were actually deity. This also implies that the idolater expected the idol to actually help them in some manner. The son

who does not lift up his eyes sees this practice for what it is. They are detestable in God's eyes and an abomination to Him. Interestingly the Hebrew word for idol is *geeloolay* which has the same root letters as dung which is *galal*. The play on words in Hebrew enhances the communication God is imparting to us as He aligns the word for idol to dung. This is shown as if the idols are nothing to be considered as is animal refuse which is trodden under their hooves in the fields and barns.

3. *Hath not defiled his neighbor's wife*, Here the moral imperatives are obvious. The son will not engage in sexual acts with any other's wives. This breaks the original order of the family which has been ordained by God. He appointed that only two, one male and one female should be of one flesh (Genesis 2:24) not any other combination. Christ affirmed this in the New Testament (Mark 10:8) Adultery breaks God's order and so does any other sexual union outside of a committed heterosexual marriage for the natural life of the pair. Even if it is done in secret it is obvious to God.

Proverbs 5:21

²¹ *For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, And he pondereth all his goings (KJV).*

4. *Neither hath wronged any, hath not taken aught to pledge, neither hath taken by robbery*. The Mosaic Law prohibited taking The "taking to pledge" which is understood as meaning a seizure to secure an overdue debt, not the taking of a pledge (collateral) by consent at the time of a loan (Deuteronomy 24:6). The word robbery is sometimes applied to the forcible taking of land or of slaves (Leviticus 5:20-26). It also applies to any situation wherein the individual assumes ownership of anything that does not legally belong to him.

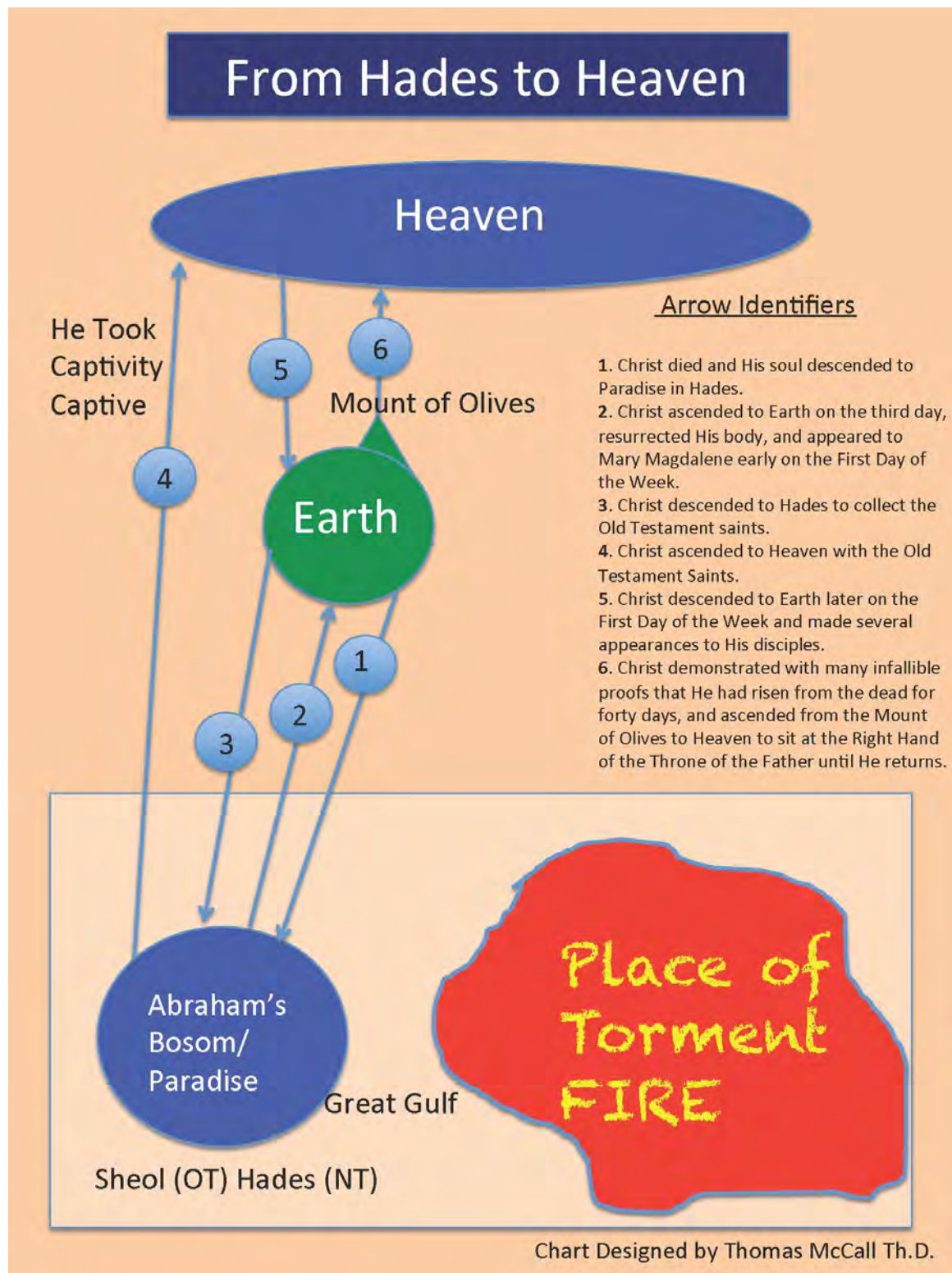
WE ARE ALL INDIVIDUALLY RESPONSIBLE TO GOD

Ezekiel 18:16b-18

^{16b} *But hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; ¹⁷that hath withdrawn his hand from the poor, that hath not received interest nor increase, hath executed mine ordinances, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live. ¹⁸As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, robbed his brother, and did that which is not good among his people, behold, he shall die in his iniquity (ASV, 1901).*

Now the narrative moves away from the negative and begins to cite the positive attributes of the son who is inwardly motivated to turn from the father's wicked practices and enforces the son's righteous behavior. He has seen his father's wickedness and decided to follow God's laws, i.e. *walked in my statutes*. As a result of this turning away from evil he will live and this included on the other side in Heaven as well as on earth. For the person who is whole heartedly trying to follow God's Law in the Old Testament he would be granted entrance to Sheol's good side (Luke 16:19-31) and manifold blessings in this world (Leviticus 26:1-13). From there they would wait until the perfect sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb to free them from Sheol and allow them to enter Heaven with the Lord

Jesus. Jesus proclaimed when He died “Tetelestai!” it is finished, the debt had been paid, and then His soul descended into Sheol/Hades. He could then announce to the righteous souls that the time had come for them to be released from Hades and ascend with Him to Heaven and the presence of the Father.



As for the evil father he would die in this earth and the other side as well. He would be as the rich man in the story the Lord told in Luke 16. It was too late for him to change his ways. He made the decision to follow wickedness on this side and it resulted in his eternal separation from God.

THE SON IS NOT PUNISHED FOR THE FATHER'S SINS

Ezekiel 18:19-20

¹⁹Yet say ye, Wherefore doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. ²⁰The soul that sinneth, it shall die: 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 (ASV, 1901).

The prevailing attitude of the proverb *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge* was that since the fathers have sinned so too must the sons bear the iniquity of the fathers in punishment. God refuted this and now emphasizes it by affirming the son who has *done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them*. He will live. The righteousness with which he lived will be turned back to him by God as a just reward. Whereas the father will die the son will not be responsible for what the father has done. The righteous will receive the righteous reward of God while the wicked will receive in like kind the wickedness they gave out. It will be turned back to him in judgment.

IF THE WICKED REPENT

Ezekiel 18:21-23

²¹But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. ²²None of his transgressions that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. ²³Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? saith the Lord Jehovah; and not rather that he should return from his way, and live (ASV, 1901)?

The Jews had accused God of not being equal to all. He repeated their cries in verse 25. He promises that the wicked is surely to live, if he turns from all his sins. Jehovah has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He desires his return so that he might live. In fact God says if the wicked turns and begins to genuinely follow God's Laws he will not remember any of the previous sins that were committed. This is one of the most beautiful aspects of knowing God. He will not remember the sins of a truly repentant person. The person who leaves his old life behind and genuinely follows the laws of God in all he does will not be punished for any sins. In God's divine providence He makes it quite clear that He does not receive any pleasure in the death of the wicked. In fact when He destroyed the world with a flood it grieved Him (Genesis 6:6). God wants the wicked to repent.

IF THE RIGHTEOUS BECOME WICKED

Ezekiel 18:24

²⁴But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? None of his righteous deeds that he hath done shall be remembered: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die (ASV, 1901).

Conversely if the righteous person became wicked and now becomes engaged in abominable behavior he will die the death of the wicked. In the Old Testament economy they way a person ended his life decided his eternal destiny. It is similar in the New Testament. We are saved by the grace of God with eternal security as the Holy Spirit seals us (Ephesians 1:13) for eternity. If one who appears to have accepted Christ becomes wicked and follows a path of unrighteousness it is probably that they never actually were saved. Occasional sin is not the issue here because that is expected and repentance is required with God's forgiveness guaranteed.

I John 1:8-10

⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: ⁷but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (ASV, 1901)

This does not apply to the person who has truly believed but has little or no fruit from the use of the spiritual gifts God give him at the point of salvation. That will result in a loss of rewards and position of authority in the Millennial Kingdom. It does not impact his salvation.

I Corinthians 3:11-15

¹¹For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; ¹³each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. ¹⁴If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire (ASV, 1901).

At the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ for the believers the means of testing is said to be fire. When fire is applied to wood, hay or stubble, they are burned up and only ashes remain. But if fire is applied to gold, silver or precious stones they become refined and more pure. So some believers will find all their works burned up, and others will merely see them refined. Finally, in verses 14-15, the results of the judgment are given. In verse 14, those who built with gold, silver and precious stones will find their works still remaining, but purified after the fire has been applied. Thus, these will receive a reward.

In verse 15, we see the result of those who have built with wood, hay and stubble. They will all be burned up. Hence, he or she will suffer loss. But, the loss is merely one of rewards and authority, nothing more. He or she will not be punished for his sins any more than a runner in a race is punished for not coming in first. But does lose out on this reward. Lest anyone concludes that he or she loses their salvation the text states in no uncertain terms, but he himself *shall be saved*. His works do not determine his salvation. His salvation is assured for he trusted in the Messiah, and salvation is by grace through faith apart from works (Ephesians 2:8-9). But he will spend the entire Kingdom period with nothing to show for his spiritual life.

IS THE LORD FAIR?

Ezekiel 18:25-30

²⁵Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel: Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? ²⁶When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth therein; in his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. ²⁷Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. ²⁸Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. ²⁹Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal? ³⁰Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord Jehovah (ASV, 1901).

God has heard the Jews complaining that His ways were not equally applied to all the people of Israel. God turns it back on them and asks them to look at themselves and see that they were unequal or unfair. They were neglecting to see God's absolute standard of justice. It is equally applied to all. Mankind cannot see into the hearts of others. Whereas God looks into the hearts and sees the actual person regardless of what sort of front they put on for display (I Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 17:10). God will judge each person equally according to the standard of justice He has revealed in His Holy Scriptures.

GOD PLEAS FOR REPENTANCE FROM SIN

Ezekiel 18:31-32

³¹Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord Jehovah: wherefore turn yourselves, and live (ASV, 1901).

As this chapter closes God says that He wants repentance and will give the Jews a new heart and spirit if they return to His standards. He asks them why do they want to die because He has no pleasure in judging them? He is a merciful God

NEXT MESSAGE: SEVERE GRIEVING FOR ISRAEL'S PRINCES

E-mail: info@pentwaterbiblechurch.com Call: Toll Free 877-706-2479