

Ezekiel 17-18 • A Parable and Generational Curses

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Ezekiel chapter 17 and it's been a while since we've been in Ezekiel, but we're going to be picking it up right where we left off. We finished chapter 16 last time and that's a fairly lengthy chapter and now we're going to get into chapter 17. Excuse me for when I cough occasionally, I've still got this lingering cough that's probably going to be with me for a while.

So anyway, let's begin with prayer, shall we? Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for giving us the time tonight to be in the Word. It is always a delight to come together as the body of Christ and dig into the scriptures. And so we pray, Father, that as we do that tonight, that you would use this time to really speak to our hearts and enlarge our understanding and give us, Lord God, a sense of just your heart, your desire, your plan, your purpose. Be with us, Lord God and just enlarge our understanding, we want to see Jesus tonight. We pray that you'd help us do that, for we ask it in that name, the name of Jesus our Savior, amen, amen, amen.

All right, as we get into chapter 17, I want to ask a question. I don't know if you've ever thought about how cool it would be if God would just speak up and comment on what's happening in the world right now. I get so many emails in a given week saying, “pastor Paul, what is going on in the world?” And what they're wanting, what they're asking is, “can you comment from the basis of scripture?”

And I, there's not a whole lot I can say to be completely honest. First of all, I'm really not a prophecy buff or even a last day's buff necessarily and so I just tell them, “well, we're in that time of birth pains.” That's about all you can say. We're going through a time which the Bible talks about where we're kind of, we're getting ready for the end, we're close to the very end of things, but no, we're not in the great tribulation.

I know it seems like it to some people, but we're not. If I had a dollar for every time somebody asked me if what we're going through is the tribulation period and whether the vaccine is the mark of the beast, or, I mean, I've had that asked many, many, many, many times. And you got to understand people, first of all,

that's not possible because well that's not the way the mark of the beast is going to be distributed. But second of all, the mark of the beast doesn't come until the midway point of the tribulation, of the great tribulation.

The anti-Christ has not been revealed, the church is still on the earth, we have not been caught away yet and so there's so many things yet. So no, we're not in the great tribulation and, no, no, no. These are birth pangs and I know that it seems really difficult, in fact, in an unprecedented sort of a way difficult, but it's not difficult in a historical context.

The world has been going through these sorts of things for a long, long time. We haven't, so we've kind of gotten pretty soft on these sorts of things and I know it's scary. And one of the other things that you have to understand about the current pandemic we're in, is one of the reasons that it's so bad is because we're talking about it all the time.

Do you guys understand, the more you talk about something and the more you think about it, the worse it gets? Do you know that? The more you fear something, the more it is to be feared? It is exactly what happened when the nation of Israel got to the promised land the first time, they sent spies into the land, and they came back with a bad report. "Well, we can't go in there, there's giants in the land." Well, the more the people talked about those giants and the more they feared those giants, the more their faith failed and the bigger the problem became. And that's just the way of things, you keep your eyes on your problems, they will get bigger.

I promise you, you keep your eyes on Jesus, your problems will stay their proper size. And so many times, what we're dealing with is just this absolute focus on the issues or the problems. And that's one of the reasons people are coming away saying, "well, this has got to be the end times, I think we're in the great tribulation" and on, and on, and on, and frankly it's just not the case, so.

But it wouldn't be cool if God would at least comment, wouldn't it? And kind of just talk about the things that are going on. The reason I mention that is because that is actually what He does in this chapter. God is going to comment on what is going on with the nation of Judah and He's going to do it in a parable form.

In fact, He's going to have Ezekiel tell them a story, which is an allegory or a parable that is going to help them understand what is going on around them. But before we get into the..., now, I could just start reading these verses and just, we could get into the story because what He does is He tells the story in parable form and then He gives the explanation for it.

But I want to give you a little bit of a backstory going into it because I think you're going to understand better. Remember that because of the disobedience of the people of Judah, the northern kingdom of Israel has long since been conquered by the Assyrians. But now, the southern kingdom of Judah, because of their disobedience, God gave His people into the hands of king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who invaded the land and deposed the king.

The king at the time was a man by the name of Jehoiakim and he was taken off to Babylon and king Nebuchadnezzar put a vassal king in the place of the throne there in Judah. A man by name of Zedekiah and Zedekiah is essentially kind of a puppet king. He's had his army taken away, he really has no way to rebel necessarily with his own resources against what the king of Babylon has done and so this is just the way things are going on.

Babylon has made a treaty with Judah through Zedekiah; this puppet or vassal king, and as long as the people of Judah were okay with this arrangement of the Babylonians being in charge, everything was going fine. And the reason it was going fine was because this was God's disciplinary act in their lives. The Babylonian army coming into Judah, this was God's discipline because they had been disobedient. And what does God want when He was putting us through a time of discipline? He wants us to submit to it, not rebel against it, but submit to it.

And as long as the people of Judah submitted to the disciplinary actions of the Lord, things were going okay. And frankly, prophets like Jeremiah, which we recently studied, were encouraging the people to do just that. They said, "accept what the Lord is doing and everything's going to go fine."

And he told them repeatedly that the Babylonian invasion and the domination that was going on was God's doing, it was God's doing and they needed to accept it. But eventually Judah became restless and false prophets began to rise up and say, "no, this is not the hand of the Lord, the Lord is going to overturn the king of Babylon." And they were getting the people all lathered up and so on. But of course, Judah didn't have any way of throwing off the domination of the Babylonian army. So what they did, is the king of Judah, Zedekiah, reached out to Egypt to make an alliance with the king of Egypt that they together would throw off the yoke of Babylon.

And of course, the Lord saw this as an act of rebellion, which it was against His disciplinary hand. So, He basically told them through the prophets, "Egypt is not going to be able to help you, not at all." So knowing what's going on, right, that Babylon is God's disciplinary hand, they want to throw off God's

disciplinary hand. They've reached out to Egypt to help them to throw off the dominion of the Babylonians, now we can read this story.

It begins here in chapter 17, verse 1 saying, *"The word of the Lord came to me: ² 'Son of man, propound a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel;'" (ESV)* And you need to know going into this, that the Hebrew word for "riddle" here speaks of a mysterious story or something that is intentionally phrased in such a way as to require an explanation.

The parable that He's going to give is contained in verses 3 through 10, so let's go ahead and read it. It says, *"³ say, Thus says the Lord God: A great eagle with great wings and long pinions, rich in plumage of many colors, came to Lebanon and took the top of the cedar."* Now stop there for a minute because the great eagle you need to know is Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. And the top of the cedar that he snatched away was the king of Judah, king Jehoiakim, all right.

In fact, we're told in verse 4, *"He broke off the topmost of its young twigs ..."* Again, that's king Jehoiakim *"... and carried it to a land of trade and set it in a city of merchants."* And that of course, again refers to Babylon.

"⁵ Then he..." And we're still talking about king Nebuchadnezzar although you aren't being told that yet, it's just all in parable form. *"⁵ Then he took of the seed of the land and planted it in fertile soil. He placed it beside abundant waters. He set it like a willow twig, ⁶ and it sprouted and became a low spreading vine, ..."* Now that's Judah.

Judah has now become a low spreading vine, okay. And God is saying that the king of Babylon planted this and it grew and it began to be fruitful. And it says, *"⁶ ... and its branches turned toward him, (meaning the king of Babylon) and its roots remained where it stood. So it became a vine and produced branches and put out boughs."*

So you can see from the language here that the Lord is showing in this parable so far that, even though the king of Judah was taken captive to Babylon, the Lord was blessing this arrangement because it was His act of discipline that was being carried out against the people, all right? And the people were going with it at this point, but then the parable goes on.

Verse 7, *"And there was another great eagle with great wings and much plumage, (now we're talking about the king of Egypt, okay) and behold, this vine (remember the vine is Judah that has been replanted) bent its roots toward*

him and shot forth its branches toward him from the bed where it was planted, that he might water it.” In other words, they're looking to him now.

“⁸ It had been planted on good soil by abundant waters, that it might produce branches and bear fruit and become a noble vine.” So God is saying that He gave this vine, this low creeping vine, everything it needed, but it sought sustenance elsewhere from the king of Egypt, all right. So obviously this is talking about the fact that they reached out to Egypt for the military might to free them from Babylonian domination.

So God asks a question in verse 9, look what He says. *“Say, Thus says the Lord God: Will it thrive? ...”* He's speaking of the vine that represents Judah and Jerusalem. *“Will it thrive?”* And He says, *“⁹ ... Will he not pull up its roots and cut off its fruit, so that it withers, so that all its fresh sprouting leaves wither? It will not take a strong arm or many people to pull it from its roots. ¹⁰ Behold, it is planted; will it thrive? Will it not utterly wither when the east wind strikes it—wither away on the bed where it sprouted?”*

So all of these rhetorical questions that the Lord is asking concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and God is telling them that because they've rebelled against His hand of discipline, the blessing that He's been giving them is going to be now pulled away.

So beginning in verse 11, where we are now, He's going to begin to explain the parable. Now you already know what it means, but I think the explanation I gave is going to help you to understand what He's saying here in these verses.

“¹¹ Then the word of the Lord came to me: ¹² “Say now to the rebellious house, ...” And right there we see how the Lord sees the actions of Judah, it's a rebellious house. He, says, *“¹² ... Do you not know what these things mean? Tell them, behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and took her king and her princes and brought them to him to Babylon.*

¹³ And he took one of the royal offspring (and now He's talking about king Zedekiah whom Nebuchadnezzar put in charge as a vassal) and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath (the chief men of the land he had taken away), ¹⁴ that the kingdom might be humble and not lift itself up, and keep his covenant that it might stand.” I want you to stop there because God reveals in these verses that He allowed the Babylonian army to come in and overwhelm Judah so that they would walk in humility, so that they would accept the hand of discipline that God had placed over them. But that's not what happened.

Verse 15, He says, *“But he rebelled against him by sending his ambassadors to Egypt, that they might give him horses and a large army. Will he thrive? Can one escape who does such things? Can he break the covenant and yet escape?”* And the covenant is not the mosaic covenant. The covenant is the agreement that Zedekiah made with the king of Babylon to basically obey, to just relax and let this thing play itself out.

And He says, “no, He broke that covenant.” He says in verse 16, *“As I live, declares the Lord God, surely in the place where the king dwells who made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant with him he broke, in Babylon he shall die.”* So this is obviously a word that is given before Zedekiah’s final rebellion, after which he was captured and brought to Babylon and put to death.

“¹⁷ Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company will not help him in war, when mounds are cast up and siege walls built to cut off many lives. ¹⁸ He despised the oath in breaking the covenant, and behold, he gave his hand and did all these things; he shall not escape. ¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord God: As I live, surely it is my oath that he despised, and my covenant that he broke. I will return it upon his head.” Now He's still not talking about the mosaic covenant. He's, when He says, “my covenant,” God is saying, “I was behind this arrangement, this was my disciplinary hand on the nation of Judah. So he didn't just break a covenant with the king of Babylon, he broke a covenant with me; an agreement that He had made.”

Verse 20. *“I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there for the treachery he has committed against me. ²¹ And all the pick of his troops shall fall by the sword, and the survivors shall be scattered to every wind, and you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken.”*

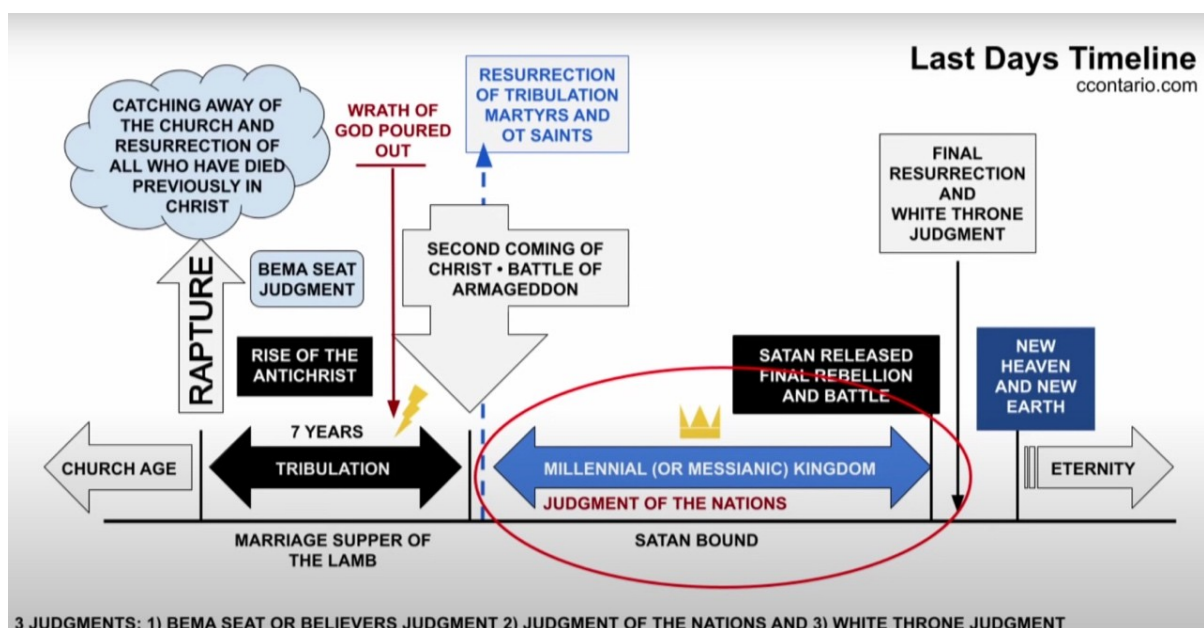
Well, we end that portion of the chapter and it's all pretty negative, wouldn't you say? I mean, he's using this story, this parable form to show that this is something that God is well aware of; this attempt to rebel against his disciplinary hand and he's basically saying it's not going to come to any fruition, it's not going to be successful.

He's going to completely fail, in fact, he's going to lose his life in the whole process of the thing. But I want you to see here as the chapter closes out, God is going to give a prophecy of something that is not yet fulfilled, but it is a prophecy that's positive.

And so He ends this chapter saying, “²² Thus says the Lord God: “I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar (and this once again refers to a king from the Davidic line) and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³ On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest.”” And this speaks of the nations of the world being gathered under the promised king that God is talking about.

And He says in verse 24, “And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it.” Now that's a very strong phrase at the end of that chapter, “I will do it” God says. When is He going to do it? Well, the nations of the world have never yet come under Israel, but they will, they will during what we call the “millennial” or “messianic kingdom.”

Let me put a chart up on the screen here for you this evening so that you can kind of see this last days... And I know there's a lot there and it's going to be very, very difficult to kind of make it all out, which is one of the reasons why I circled in red that area, that blue double arrow there that says “MILLENNIAL (OR MESSIANIC) KINGDOM.” We are in the CHURCH AGE, which is listed on the far-left side of that chart. The TRIBULATION period is going to commence once the church is caught away to be with the Lord.



And after the 7-year tribulation where the wrath of God is poured out upon the earth, there will be the second coming of Jesus Christ. Followed by the battle of Armageddon where the Lord will put down the enemies that come against Israel and then we will enter into that period of time called the “Millennial” or “Messianic Kingdom.” It's a time during which Satan will be bound and there will be unprecedented peace and prosperity on the earth for a period of 1,000 years according to the Bible.

And this is what the Lord is promising here at the end of Ezekiel chapter 17. It has not yet happened because obviously the great tribulation has not yet happened, but it is going to happen. And the Lord says here at the end of this chapter, *“I have spoken and I will do it.”*

Now, by the way, if you would like to get a copy of this last day's timeline, you can actually download it from our website. If you go to www.ccontario.com/ezekiel, you'll find a button there at the top of our Ezekiel study thus far, and you'll be able to download [a PDF of this timeline](#). So once again, it's www.ccontario.com/ezekiel and you'll find this timeline.

Chapter 18, let's get into chapter 18. It says, *“The word of the Lord came to me: ² ‘What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge’?”* All right, so stop there for a moment, we need to talk about what this means. This proverb, if you will, as spoken by the Israelites, was basically saying that, “the reason we're going through the hardships that we're going through and we are going through hardships, is because our parents and our grandparents sinned and now we're reaping the judgment that came because of their sin.”

And what they're doing is they're deflecting the guilt, that's really all they're doing. They're taking whatever accountability that they might themselves have to stand and face and address with God, and they're blaming it on their parents. How long have people been blaming things on their parents? Good grief. “My parents, if it wasn't for my parents,” it is very common sort of a thing. “I'm going through all these things here because my parents.” Well, interestingly enough, this proverb was also addressed by the Lord in the Book of Jeremiah, which tells us how popular it had actually become as a saying. But more than that, it was a popular belief in what we call today, “a victim mentality.”

“You see, I'm a victim, I don't deserve any of this. I'm a victim, I'm a victim of my circumstances, I'm a victim of the people who came before me, I'm a victim, I'm a victim, I'm a victim.” And we understand, we know that this is a very

popular refrain that we hear today, well, it was going on then too. The Jews living in Judah believe they were victims of the sins of their parents and their grandparents. "It's their fault that we're going through all this, now listen to me."

In other words, what we're saying is, they believed they were victims of a generational curse. Have you ever heard of generational curses? It's very popular in some parts of the world as far as the teaching goes, particularly in the continent of Africa, I find. Well, we'll talk about it.

Here's God's response, verse 3 and 4, "*As I live, declares the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴ Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.*" All right, stop there because there's 2 things that I want to bring out here, there's 2 points that I want to make and I'm going to put each one of them up on the screen for you to see them. Point number 1:

Important Points to Remember

Point #1: Both the blessing OF LIFE as well as the judgement of DEATH in these verses is temporal, NOT ETERNAL.

You're going to hear about people who are going to die for their sin. He's not talking about eternal damnation, He's talking about physical death, okay? So that's very important that you understand that. Because He's going to talk about how the people who do right, who kept the law, are going to live. We know from the New Testament that God never promised eternal life for the people when they kept the law, He never made that promise. So these are not talking about eternal life and eternal death. But there's another point that I want you to take note of here. Point number 2 is that,

Important Points to Remember

Point #2: Generational judgements must be correctly understood.

Point #2: Generational judgements, (or if you will, generational curses) must be understood correctly. (because they are not understood correctly)

Now, you might have noticed, I said a moment ago that in this chapter, God is going to correct their mistaken notions about generational curses. And some of you might be thinking, now, wait a minute, I happen to know the generational curses are real because, I mean, what about that passage in Deuteronomy that talks about generational curses. Here it is up on the screen.

Deuteronomy 5:7-10 (ESV)

“You shall have no other gods before me. “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

*“You shall have no other gods before me. (God says to the nation of Israel)
“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

So people read that right there and they say, “see, so pastor Paul, you see you got a problem because God just said here that there's such a thing as generational curses.” And so now we've got all these teachings that circulate in the body of Christ in certain parts of the world, in some cases here even in America, where they're teaching you that if you're going through rough times, it's probably because there's a curse on, I don't know, some family member back to the third or fourth generation, something somebody did, and now you got to break that curse in order to be free from the circumstances that you now find yourself in.

This is a very common belief and it is biblically false because in this passage that we're looking at here on the screen, there's a key to understanding this idea of generational judgments and I'm going to highlight for you some of the words later on in the passage. So let's take a look at this passage again with some of the words highlighted. Let's go to the next slide, look what it says there.

Deuteronomy 5:7-10 (ESV)

“You shall have no other gods before me. “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation OF THOSE WHO HATE ME, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Did you catch the deal there? So when is a generational judgment passed along to the third and fourth generation? When they carry on the heart of their parents, grandparents, or whatever, and continue to hate the Lord and rail against the Lord. But what happens if you've got a parent and you're just a second generation and your parent hated God and railed against God and wanted nothing to do with God? Now are you to live under a generational curse or judgment because of that now that you're a believer? Not at all. What we forget is to take this passage into consideration. 2 Corinthians up on the screen, chapter 5, verse 17.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

And I just want to encourage everybody who's ever been exposed to the idea of generational judgments or generational curses to take time and meditate on 2 Corinthians 5:17 because that passage will set you free. Because you do not have to live under a generational curse or a generational judgment.

When you come to Jesus Christ, He has taken your judgment, He has taken your condemnation, He has borne it on Himself on the cross. You know when I say from the pulpit that you're never going to answer for any of your sins when you stand before God, do you know that freaks people out? I seriously get notes at least once a week from somebody who heard me say that and are just freaked out.

I got one this week, “pastor Paul, I don't understand, I don't understand what you're saying. So yeah, sure I came to Jesus Christ and I accepted what He did for me on the cross, and I know that He forgave me for all my sins. But you're telling me that if I continue to sin, that I'm never going to stand before the God in before God in judgment.” And I tell him, “that's exactly what I'm telling you.”

Jesus either bore your sin in the condemnation and judgment of it, or He didn't. And what He said on the cross was, “it is finished” which means paid in full. (John 19:30) And they usually always like to throw in another question, “well, what if somebody like just keeps living a life of unrepentant sin, what then?” I go, well, “why are you asking? Are you planning on living a life of unrepentant sin? Are you kind of preparing for the future? Is that why you're asking?”

Don't even go there, why are you asking about somebody who lives a life of unrepentant sin? Is there somebody you want to judge? Is there somebody you need to condemn? Why are you asking the question? Live your life for Jesus,

live it for Him 100% and you never have to worry about all that junk. And besides, that's God's business to judge the sinner, not yours and He doesn't always share all the details with you and me. All you need to know is that Jesus died for your sins and “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” That's all you need to know, live your life.

Now, beginning in verse 5 of this chapter, He begins to outline 3 cases and to highlight this principle of what we're going to call, individual responsibility. He says, ⁵“*If a man is righteous and does what is just and right—* (and then He goes on to describe what just and right means) ⁶*if he does not eat upon the mountains* (and that refers to participating in an idol feast, which they did on high mountains or hills) *or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman in her time of menstrual impurity,* (again, those had to do with prohibitions related to the Law of Moses concerning blood)

⁷*does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment,* ⁸*does not lend at interest or take any profit,* (He's talking about the man who puts God's law ahead of financial gain) *withholds his hand from injustice, executes true justice between man and man,* ⁹*walks in my statutes, and keeps my rules by acting faithfully—he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares the Lord God.”*

Okay, you got it, pretty simple, straightforward. Again, it's not talking about eternal life, they saying, “he shall live.” ¹⁰“*If he fathers a son who is violent, a shedder of blood, who does any of these things* ¹¹*(though he himself did none of these things), who even eats upon the mountains, defiles his neighbor's wife,* ¹²*oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore the pledge, lifts up his eyes to the idols, commits abomination,* ¹³*lends at interest, and takes profit; shall he then live? He shall not live. He has done all these abominations;* (remember, this is the son of the man who did none of these things) *he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself.”*

So the principle goes the same way, the son doesn't benefit from the father's righteousness, the father lived a life that was righteous before God, but the son didn't. But the son doesn't get any special consideration because his father was a godly man.

¹⁴“*Now suppose this man fathers a son who sees all the sins that his father has done; he sees, and does not do likewise:* ¹⁵*he does not eat upon the mountains* (again, participating in pagan feasts) *or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife,* ¹⁶*does not oppress anyone, exacts*

no pledge, commits no robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, ¹⁷ withholds his hand from iniquity, takes no interest or profit, obeys my rules, and walks in my statutes; he shall not die for his father's iniquity; he shall surely live.” Again, principle of individual responsibility.

“¹⁸ As for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother, and did what is not good among his people, behold, he shall die for his iniquity. ¹⁹ “Yet you say, ‘Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?’ When the son has done what is just and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live. ²⁰ The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”

But then the Lord gives another scenario. *“²¹ “But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²² None of the transgressions that he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done he shall live. ²³ Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? ²⁴ But when a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice and does the same abominations that the wicked person does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds that he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, for them he shall die.*

²⁵ “Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? ²⁶ When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. ²⁷ Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. ²⁸ Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²⁹ Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?””

So here’s the conclusion. *“³⁰ “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. ³¹ Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³² For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live.””*

Isn't that an incredible chapter? I mean, I just, I think that's so insightful. Because not only does it address the issue of the throwing off of responsibility onto my forefathers or my parents or whatever, it's their fault, but it brings me to an understanding that God deals with each man according to his own life and that the heart of the Lord is mercy.

He says, "even a wicked man, if he turns from his wickedness, none of his previous wickedness will be remembered" and mankind, what does mankind do? "Well, that doesn't make sense, that's not just." And God asked the question, "really, is it me who's not just?" The word "just" of course means fair. God makes the rules and that means whatever He does is fair, even if it doesn't agree with you or me, right?

It might mess with your mind a little bit when you try to figure some of these things out and you might say, "ummm, I just don't ..." People say that to me all the time, "that just doesn't make sense to me." I'm like, "so it doesn't make sense to you, who are you? Did you think you were someone special?" "I think God's wrong."

Yeah, no, I don't think so. He is the Lord eternal God and He is perfect in justice and this is a great chapter to learn from. So we find out a lot about the heart of God through this chapter, which is always good. Because the more you learn about the heart of God, the more you're going to be able to interpret the word of God. Do you know that? Do you guys get that?

Do you know that a large part of interpreting God's word correctly is knowing His heart. When people don't know God's heart, they struggle to understand His word. It just seems like a bunch of rules and they don't know Him, and so they ask a lot of questions: "well, what about this rule? And what about that rule? What about this rule? And is it a sin to do this? Or is it a sin to do that?" But when you learn the heart of the Father, you don't have to ask a lot of those questions. It really truly becomes this interpretive matrix that helps us to understand the will of God. So let's pray.

Father, thank you so much for Your Word. Thank you for the insights that we gain from it. Thank you for the wisdom, the understanding of your heart. Lord, continue to teach us, help us to understand, help us to grow and help us, Lord, to be humble. We look to you, we commit our hearts to you. In Jesus' precious name we pray, amen.