

REPENT AND LIVE!

Ezekiel 18:1-32

Key verse: 31-32 “Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!”

Background: God brought the people of Israel into the promised land warning them that they must worship God only or they would be scattered among the nations (Dt 28:58-64). God allowed them to live in the land of Israel some 800 years in which time they continually turned to foreign God's and did not eliminate the high places (local shrines) of the land. While there were several kings that led reform, the overall direction of the nation never changed to worshipping God exclusively. God first judged the northern kingdom of Israel and they were carried into exile by Assyria never to return (2 Ki 17:5-6). Second, God judged the southern kingdom of Judah through Babylon (2 Ki 24:3-4). There were 3 waves of exile 605, 597, 586BC. The first was an exile of some of the nobility as recorded in Daniel 1. The second was the exile of the middle class and the rest of the nobility—some twenty thousand people including Ezekiel and his wife. The final wave of exiles, which has not happened yet at this point, was the total destruction of Jerusalem and the rest of the middle class leaving the peasant class in Judah (see Lamentations).

1. Who was Ezekiel, where was he at the time of writing and what was the situation of the nation of Judah (1:1-3)? What was God's call for Ezekiel (2:3-5; 3:17)? What was God's judgment on Judah (9:9-10; 21:24)?
 2. What did the proverb of the people reveal about their attitude toward God's judgment (18:1-3)? What do we learn about God through the first example (4-9)? How is a righteous lifestyle characterized?
 3. What do we learn about God from the second and third examples (10-13, 14-18)? What deeply ingrained idea was God challenging in them (19; cf. Ex 20:5; Jn 9:2)? What does God teach about his judgment (20)? What do we learn about God's justice?
 4. How can the wicked person be saved (21)? What is the result of their repentance (22)? What pleases God and what does this show about him (23)? Why is this so important in understanding God's judgment against the wicked?
 5. What great warning does God give to the righteous (24; 33:12-13)? What was the ironic complaint of the people and where did this idea come from (25, 2b; 22:2-5)? How did God reiterate that his judgment was objective, true and just (26-29)?
 6. What is God's strong imperative (30)? How could they get a new heart and a new spirit (31a; cf. 36:25-27)? What is God's heartfelt plea to his people (31b-32)? How did God call Ezekiel to participate in his shepherd heart for his people (33:7-11)?
- * How does this view of God's judgment give us perspective as we study Revelation?