

The Righteous Shall Live

Key Verse: “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”
—Ezekiel 18:4

Selected Scripture:
Ezekiel 18:1-9,30-32

me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.”—Ezek. 18:1-3

The people of Israel had often blamed their sins on the failure of their ancestors. The Heavenly Father refuted this logic. Through Ezekiel he indicated that individuals are held responsible for their own sins. Continuing the account, several examples are given concerning the justice of God, illustrated by the wicked son of a righteous man, the righteous son of a wicked father, a wicked man who repents, and a righteous man who forsakes his righteousness and commits iniquity. (vss. 5-24) In any of these situations, God desires repentance from the one who sins, and

UNLIKE JEREMIAH, WHO prophesied in Judah and foretold its destruction before he was taken captive, the Prophet Ezekiel received his commission from God while in Babylon. (Ezek. 1:1-3) Ezekiel warned the house of Israel concerning the consequences of their unfaithfulness to God. In the verses preceding our Key Verse, he prophesied:

“The word of the LORD came unto

has no “pleasure” in the death of any individual.—vs. 32

As a result of Adam’s disobedience, “there is none righteous.” If Jesus had not given his perfect humanity as ransom to purchase all mankind, no one would be able to meet the Heavenly Father’s requirements to attain everlasting life.—Rom. 3:10; Ps. 49:7

During the present Gospel Age, those who have repented from sin, and who fully consecrate themselves to do the Heavenly Father’s will, and who additionally are diligently striving to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, are counted by God as having been justified. (Rom. 8:1,28-30) If faithful in carrying out their vows of consecration, they will receive a heavenly reward and assist the Master during the coming kingdom in restoring mankind back to the state of perfection that Adam and Eve enjoyed before they were disobedient.

A future application of the principle that “the soul that sinneth, it shall die,” will also occur when Satan is bound. Then mankind will have the opportunity to attain perfection through obedience and live forever. At that time, all will be accountable for their own deeds because they will be fully enlightened as to the Heavenly Father’s standards.—Jer. 31:30-34

God does not purposely desire the destruction of individuals. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” (John 3:16,17) Our Heavenly Father is a God of love and compassion who has made provision for the salvation of all who desire to come into harmony with his righteous will.

When all mankind will be raised from the tomb, each will be given an opportunity to come into full harmony with God. Those who heartily obey his righteous precepts “shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isa. 35:1-10; Rev. 21:1-4 ■