

# A WICKED PROVERB

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Both Jeremiah 31:29-30 and Ezekiel 18 refer to a proverb that was spoken among God's people who were captives in Babylon. The proverb said, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer 31:29; Ezek 18:2). In both of these passages, God said that this proverb would no longer be spoken among His people (Jer 31:29; Ezek 18:3).

## **God is always fair**

The proverb was wrong because it was accusing God of being unfair. They believed God was punishing them not for their own sins, but for the sins of their fathers. But God corrected this error in their thinking. God said, "*But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge*" (Jer 29:30). In the same manner, Ezekiel 18:4 says, "*Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins, it shall die.*" God said that a wicked son of a righteous man would surely die because of his sins (Ezek 18:5-13,18), and a righteous son of a wicked man would not die because of his father's wickedness, but would surely live (Ezek 18:14-17,19). The people asked, "Does not the son bear the iniquity of the father?" (Ezek 18:19), but God answered, "*The soul that sins, 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*" (Ezek 18:20). A wicked man who repents will surely live (Ezek 18:21-23,27-32), and a righteous man who turns to wickedness will surely die (Ezek 18:24-26). God affirmed that His ways are indeed "equal," but it was the ways of the people of Israel that were unequal (Ezek 18:25,29). Each person will be judged according to his own deeds, whether good or bad, and will either live or die (eternally) based upon what they themselves have done.

## **Judged according to our works**

Matthew 16:27 says, "*For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.*"

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(continued)

Jesus also says in Revelation 2:23, "*I will give unto every one of you according to your works,*" and in Revelation 22:12 says, "*And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*" In John 5:28-29, Christ teaches that where we spend our eternity is directly based upon what we have done in this life: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Also, 2 Corinthians 5:10 says that "*we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*" Romans 2:6-11 similarly says that in the judgment, God "will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God." Romans 14:11-12 says, "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*" Revelation 20:12-13 gives this description of Judgment Day: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: *and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.* And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: *and they were judged every man according to their works.*" Therefore, 1 Peter 1:17 concludes that "if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." From the teachings of these scriptures, it should be understood with certainty that our teeth will not be set on edge according to what someone else has done.