

Reading Guide for Ezekiel 18

Chapter 18 is a lengthy disputation oracle, made up of a thesis, counterthesis, and dispute. The thesis (v.2) is the exiles' false assumption that their current plight is due not to their own sin, but to the sin of the previous generation. The Lord's dispute and countertheses reveal that the current generation has likewise sinned but, if they repent, will find forgiveness and restoration.

Message-reception formula (18:1)

Thesis and Dispute (18:2-4)

The People's False Thesis: The Exiles are Bearing Others' Guilt (v. 2)
The Lord's Dispute (vv. 3-4a)

First Counterthesis: The Responsibility and Outcome for Each Individual (18:4b-9)

The Soul who Sins Shall Die (v. 4b)
The Righteous Shall Live (vv. 5-9)

Elaboration of the Counterthesis: The Righteous and the Wicked will Bear the Appropriate Outcome (18:10-17)

Wicked Children of the Righteous will Die (vv. 10-13)
Righteous Children of the Wicked will Live (vv. 14-17)

Further Elaboration of the Counterthesis: Denial of Generational Guilt for the Individual (18:18-19)

The Father will Die for His Sin (v. 18)
The People's Objection (v. 19a)
The Son will Live for His Righteousness (v. 19b)

Restatement of the First Counterthesis (18:20)

The Soul who Sins Shall Die (v. 20a)
Denial of Generational Guilt for the Individual (v. 20b)
The Righteous and the Wicked will Each Bear the Appropriate Outcome (v. 20c)

Second Counterthesis: Judgment According to How People Change (18:21-24)

The Repentant Wicked will be Forgiven (vv. 21-22)
The Lord's Desire for Repentance (v. 23)
The Righteous Person Who Turns to Wickedness will Die (vv. 24)

Defense and Affirmation of the Counterthesis (18:25-29)

The People's Objection and the Lord's Response (v. 25)
The Righteous Person Who Turns to Wickedness will Die (vv. 26)
The Repentant Wicked will be Forgiven (vv. 27-28)
Restatement of Objection and Response (v. 29)

The Lord's Appeal for Repentance unto Life (18:30-32)