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82 THE CONVENTION TEACHER

Lesson II.
April 11, 1948

GOD'S MESSAGE TO A PEOPLE IN EXILE

SENIOR TOPIC: EZEKIEL'S MESSAGE FOR OUR DAY

Ezekiel 18:1-4; 34:11-16; 36:25-28.
[[line]]

AUTHORIZED VERSION

1 The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying,

2 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?

3 As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.

4 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.

11 For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

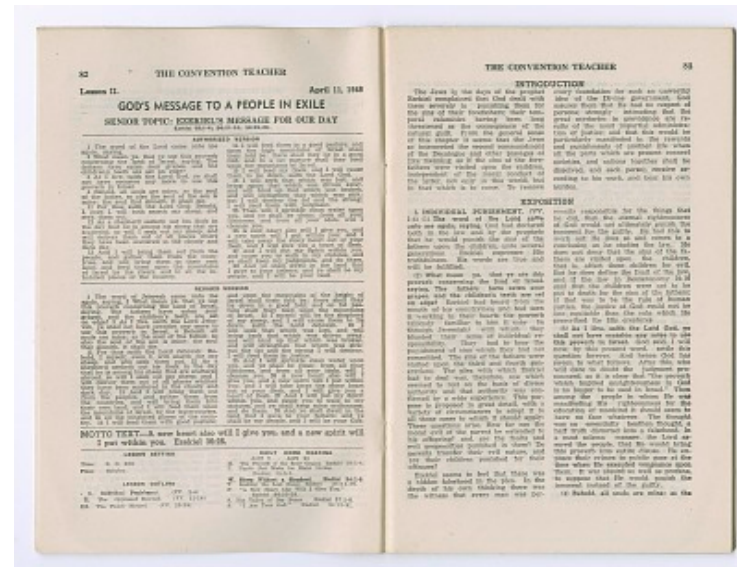
13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.

16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.



26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.
[[line]]

REVISED VERSION

1 The word of Jehovah came unto me again, saying, 2 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? 3 As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. 4 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.

11 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. 13 And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them with good pasture; and upon the mountains of the height of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie down in a good fold; and on fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord Jehovah. 16 I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy; I will feed them in justice.

25 And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them. 28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.
[[line]]

MOTTO TEXT - A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. Ezekiel 36:26.
[[line]]

LESSON SETTING

Time: B. C. 593

Place: Babylon

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. Individual Punishment. (VV. 1-4)
- II. The Oppressed Rescued. (VV. 11-16)
- III. The People Blessed. (VV. 25-28)

DAILY HOME READING

April 5 - April 11

- M. The Proverb of the Sour Grapes. Ezekiel 18:1-4.
- T. Deeds that Make for Right Living. Ezekiel 18:5-9.
- W. Sheep Without a Shepherd. Ezekiel 34:1-5.
- T. Seeking the Lost Sheep. Ezekiel 34:1-16.
- F. "A New Heart Also Will I Give You." Ezekiel 36:25-28.
- S. The Valley of Dry Bones. Ezekiel 37:1-6.
- S. "I Am Your God." Ezekiel 34:25-31.

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INTRODUCTION

The Jews in the days of the prophet Ezekiel complained that God dealt with them severely in punishing them for the sins of their forefathers; their temporal calamities having been long threatened as the consequence of the natural guilt. From the general sense of this chapter it seems that the Jews so interpreted the second commandment of the Decalogue and other passages of like meaning, as if the sins of the forefathers were visited upon the children, independent of the moral conduct of the latter, not only in this world, but in that which is to come. To remove every foundation for such an unworthy idea of the Divine government, God assures them that He had no respect of persons; strongly intimating that the great mysteries in providence are results of the most impartial administration of justice; and that this would be particularly manifested in the rewards and punishments of another life when all the parts which are present connect societies, and nations together shall be dissolved, and each person receive according to his work, and bear his own burden.

EXPOSITION

I. INDIVIDUAL PUNISHMENT. (VV. 1-4) (1) The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, God had declared both in the law and by the prophets that he would punish the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto several generations. Ezekiel expresses His truthfulness. His words are true and will be fulfilled.

(2) 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? Ezekiel had heard from the mouth of his countrymen and had seen it working in their hearts the proverb (already familiar to him it may be through Jeremiah) with which they blunted their sense of individual responsibility. They had to bear the punishment of sins which

they had not committed. The sins of the fathers were visited upon the third and fourth generations. The plea with which Ezekiel had to deal was, therefore, one which seemed to rest on the basis of divine authority and that authority was confirmed by a wide experience. This purpose is proposed in great detail, with a variety of circumstances to adopt it to all those cases to which it should apply: These questions arise, How far can the moral evil of the parent be extended to his offspring? and, are the faults and evil propensities punished in them? Do parents transfer their evil nature, and are their children punished for their offences?

Ezekiel seems to feel that there was a hidden falsehood in the plea. In the depth of his own thinking there was the witness that every man was personally responsible for the things that he did, that the eternal righteousness of God would not ultimately punish the innocent for the guilty. He had this to work out: He does so and comes to a conclusion as he studies the law. He does not deny that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, that is, affect these children for evil. But he does define the limit of the law, and if the law in Deuteronomy 24:16 said that the children were not to be put to death for the sins of the fathers; if that was to be the rule of human justice, the justice of God could not be less equitable than the rule which He prescribed for His creatures.

(3) As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. God said, I will now, by this present word, settle this question forever. And hence God has sworn to what follows. After this, who will dare to doubt the judgment pronounced, so it is clear that "the proverb which implied unrighteousness in God is no longer to be used in Israel." Then among the people in whom He was manifesting His righteousness for the education of mankind it should seem to have no face whatever. The thought was an essentially heathen thought, a half truth distorted into a falsehood. In a most solemn manner, the Lord assured the people, that He would bring this proverb into entire disuse. He exposes their crimes to public gaze at the time when He executed vengeance upon them. It was absurd as well as profane, to suppose that He would punish the innocent instead of the guilty.

(4) Behold, all souls are mine; as the

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