

# Children Are Not Punished for the Sins of the Parents

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(Exodus 20:5).*

*Children Are Not Punished for the Sins of the Parents  
(Ezekiel 18:20).*

Instead of proving that God is contradictory or unjust, the correct understanding of the two scriptures mentioned above, confirm He is neither,

The soul (living being) who sins (cf. 1Jn. 3:4) shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous (person) shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked (person) shall be upon himself (Ezekiel 18:20; Ed. notes in parentheses; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

The principle of bearing one's own sin is central to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. No sinner can blame his/her actions on someone else. Every sinner is equally guilty of everlasting death and it is only through faith in Christ's shed blood that a repentant individual has any hope of living forever (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; cf. Heb. 9:22). Also, one sinful human being cannot pay for another human being's sins. This is one of the lessons that God taught ancient Israel through the symbolism associated with the Day of Atonement (see study: Atonement – Day of Covering).

When you (Moses) take the census of the children of Israel for their number (on the Day of Atonement; cf. Ex. 30:10; Lev. 16:3-34), then **every man shall give a ransom** (the price of a life) **for himself** to the Lord, when you

number them, that there may be no plague among them when you number them. <sup>13</sup>This is what everyone among those who are numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (a shekel is twenty gerahs). The half-shekel shall be an offering to the Lord. <sup>14</sup>Everyone included among those who are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering to the Lord. <sup>15</sup>**The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel**, when you give an offering to the Lord, to make atonement for yourselves (Ex. 30:12-15; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

In the symbolism associated with the "ransom money," if the rich could give more, it would imply that they could cover the sins of the poor. However, God's law did not allow this to occur. Instead, everyone was treated equally no matter what their status in society. Whether they were rich or poor, everyone was guilty of sin. God did not consider one person as being better than another in this matter (cf. Rom. 3:23).

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, **who shows no partiality** (favoritism) nor takes a bribe (Dt. 10:17; cf. Ac. 10:34; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Bearing in mind that God shows no favoritism, and views one person's sins as being equally as abhorrent as another's, the last scripture that some claim is contradictory will be examined in its proper context.

You shall not bow down to them nor serve (worship) them (other gods). For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting (punishing) the iniquity (sins; 1Jn. 3:4) of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations **of those who hate Me** (Ex. 20:5; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

When examined closely, and in context, God is stating that when parents teach their children to hate God, the consequences of this instruction, whether it is in word or deed, will continue to harm the children of that family for three to four generations. It is also implied that God will intervene by the third or fourth generation to change the direction of this family's descendants, so they cease from harming themselves and start benefiting from obedience to God's law and commandments.

Now therefore, listen to me, my children, for blessed are those who keep my ways. <sup>33</sup>Hear instruction and be (become) wise, and do not disdain it. <sup>34</sup>Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors (cf. Mt. 24:46; Mk. 12:43). <sup>35</sup>For whoever finds me finds life (cf. Jn. 11:25; 14:6), and obtains favor from the Lord; <sup>36</sup>But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; **all those who hate me love death** (Prov. 8:32-36; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

To summarize, if a parent commits a capital offense such as murder, none of his or her children are to be punished for it. However, if a parent teaches his or her children to rebel against Almighty God, those children will suffer the consequences for breaking the laws that God created to protect them. It is imperative for the safety and happiness of children that their parents teach God's law and commandments to them. Failure to do so will result in serious consequences for future generations if they continue in this pattern of rebellion. In contrast, those parents who instill God's values will be showing true love to their children (cf. 1 Jn. 3:3-5; 5:2-3), For I (God) have known him (Abraham), in order that he may command his children and his household after him (future generations), that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what (the promises;

cf. Gen. 17:1-7) He has spoken to him (Gen. 18:19; Ed. notes in parentheses). So no contradiction exists between Exodus 20:5 and Ezekiel 18:20. These scriptures are dealing with two completely different subjects as explained in this study.

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