

## August 23 Answers

- 1) The exiles responded to Ezekiel's story by accusing God of punishing them for the sins of their **fathers** (Ezek 18:2). God responded in the strongest possible terms (cf. Ezek 18:3). God's wrath and judgment for sin does not fall on the innocent. Instead, "the soul who sins shall die" (Ezek 18:4). This teaches us that while the wickedness of earlier generations may have **consequences** that affect us in the present, God will not hold us **guilty** or punish us for the sins that others commit. God's promise to visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children was for "those who **hate** me" (Exod 20:5). Children who **follow** in their parent's wicked ways will justly receive such a visitation (cf. 2 Chr 21:12–15; Matt 23:32). Ezekiel also reminded the exiles of what God said through Moses (Deut 24:16). A wicked son would not be declared innocent because of his father's righteousness, and a righteous son would not be punished because of his father's wickedness (Ezek 18:20). This means that each individual stands on their **own** before God. We are innocent or guilty based on our own decisions. Ezekiel went on to say that the wicked who repent will **live** and the righteous who rebel will **die**. It's clear that this refers to more than **physical** life and death, for what profit is there for the wicked to live in this life, if they will die eternally in the next? God was speaking of the life that comes from a "new **heart** and a new **spirit**" (Ezek 18:31). Such life will last **forever** because it is united with the source of life, Jesus Christ. In the same way, the **death** that comes from apostasy and rebellion will also last forever. "The soul who sins shall die," and that death is **eternal** separation from God in the fires of hell.