



## SAVED TO SERVE

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### ARE WE PUNISHED FOR THE SINS OF OUR PARENTS?

1. In this Sabbath School Lesson, we will answer the question from scripture, are we punished for the sins of our parents and forefathers?
2. What does God say He will do in Exodus 20:5? See also the following similar scriptures - Exodus 34:6-7; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:8-10.

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3. **Note:** In this study, we won't be focusing on generations based on years but generations in the sense of children, descendants and successors. Read Psalm 22:30; Psalm 109:13; Proverbs 30:11; and Joel 1:3 for confirmation.
  4. To understand what this means, let us study the context. God reveals His character in these verses. To whom does God show mercy? Exodus 20:6

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5. **Note:** Since God shows mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments, it means that they are being rewarded for their personal choice to obey Him. If it were true that God punished us because of the sins of our fathers, all of us would be lost because all of our forefathers, beginning with Adam, have sinned (Romans 3:23). Sin is a choice.

6. In contrast to those who love God, what attitude do the wicked have toward God? Exodus 20:5

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7. **Note:** The wicked in Exodus 20:4-5 receive punishment for two primary reasons: (1) They hate God, and (2) they worship idols instead of the one true God. So, are we punished for the sins of our parents and forefathers? God applies punishment when we fail to learn from the mistakes of our forefathers and commit the same sins that they committed. In this way, He visits "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children". Therefore, the judgment inflicted upon a person is rightfully deserved because he or she was guilty of the sin.

8. King Belshazzar is a perfect example of the aforementioned point. What was one main reason why God overthrew the kingdom of Babylon under Belshazzar? Daniel 5:18-22 (the key verse is 22)

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**"Through the folly and weakness of Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, proud Babylon was soon to fall."**  
{PK 522.2}

9. To further amplify these points, we will look at examples in scripture where God brought punishment upon the children in the third and fourth generation [not by years but children & successors] for walking in the sins of their forefathers. Many Christians wonder, "what benefit do I get from reading the accounts and lineage of the kings in the Bible?" The entire Bible revolves around the Ten Commandments. All the successive kings fulfill the prophecy in Exodus 20:5 that God brings judgment upon the third and fourth generation: not arbitrarily but due to each person's choice. We will discover that the argument that "I'm born this way, and cannot overcome my sin" is destroyed by the teaching of Exodus 20:4-6.

10. What sin did King Jeroboam lead Israel to commit? 1 Kings 12:26, 28-31

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- a) In your own words, what judgment did God prophecy upon the house of Jeroboam because of his sins?  
1 Kings 14:10, 11, 16

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11. Who was Nadab? What did he do in the sight of the Lord? 1 Kings 15:25-26 (Note: Jeroboam would be the first generation and Nadab would be the second generation).
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12. Who reigned after Nadab? What was he guilty of doing? 1 Kings 15:27, 33; 1 Kings 16:1-4 (Note: He would be the third generation).
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13. Who reigned after Baasha? 1 Kings 16:6, 8
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- a) In this fourth generation, what punishment finally fell upon Elah and his house? 1 Kings 16:9-13
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14. **Note:** We see clearly that God punished Elah and slayed all his house because he & the members of his house hold continued in the sins of his father Baasha, and departed not from the sins of Jeroboam. God poured out his judgment for the sins of Jeroboam in the fourth generation because his descendants and successors, followed in his sins.
15. Let's look at another example in scripture. Zimri conspired against and killed Elah. He also continued in the sins of Jeroboam even though he ruled for seven days (1 Kings 16:15, 17-19)! Who ruled in Israel after Zimri, and in whose footsteps did he walk? 1 Kings 16:23, 25-26
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- a) **Note:** Zimri ruled for seven days and then, Omri ruled. Both followed in the sins of Jeroboam. They are the first generation, after the retribution that God brought upon Elah for his sin of following the wickedness of Jeroboam.
16. Who was the son of Omri? Did he walk righteously before the Lord? 1 Kings 16:30-33 (Note: He is the second generation).
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17. When Ahab heard about the judgment that would come upon his house, what did he do? As a result, what did God say He would not do? 1 Kings 21:21-23, 27-29
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18. After Ahab, who ruled? Whose path did he follow? 1 Kings 22:40, 51-53 (Note: He is the third generation).
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19. Ahaziah died and was replaced by Ahab's son, his brother - Jehoram (2 Kings 1:1-2, 17 and 2 Kings 3:1). How else is Jehoram spelled in scripture? Compare 2 Kings 3:1 and 2 Kings 8:28.
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- a) Did Jehoram/Joram depart from the sins of Jeroboam? 2 Kings 3:1-3
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20. Jehu was anointed to be the next king of Israel. What mission was he given by God through the prophet Elisha? 2 Kings 9:1-2, 6-9
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21. **Note:** Jehu slayed Joram/Jehoram and all the house of Ahab (2 Kings 9:24-37; 2 Kings 10:1-11). Since Joram and Ahaziah were both sons of Ahab and they both reigned as kings, they would be considered the third generation, which started with Omri king of Israel. God fulfilled His promise of pouring out punishment upon the third and fourth generation of those that **HATED** Him or those who **CHOSE** to walk in the sins of their fathers.
22. **Further Study:** Another clear example of God pouring out judgment in the third and fourth generation of those that hate Him is seen in the descendants of King Hezekiah. Because of his pride in revealing his riches to the Babylonians and not teaching them about God, God promised that Babylon would carry everything in his house down with them to Babylon (2 Kings 20:14-18). God fulfilled His promise to bring judgment in the third and fourth generation. **Notice below how God only counted the wicked kings in the "generations," and not King Josiah who was righteous.** See below for clarity.

## Last Kings Of Israel Before The Captivity By Babylon

- **King Hezekiah** (RIGHTEOUS, DIED SAVED) (1st generation) 2 Kings 20:14-20
  - **King Manasseh**, son of Hezekiah (WICKED BUT DIED SAVED) (2nd generation) 2 Kings 20:21; 2 Kings 21:1-3; 2 Chronicles 33:10-20
  - **King Amon**, son of Manasseh (WICKED, DIED LOST) (3rd generation) 2 Kings 21:18-19
  - **King Josiah**, son of Amon (RIGHTEOUS, DIED SAVED) 2 Kings 21:23-24; 2 Kings 22:1-2 (God skipped counting Josiah as a "generation" to pour out His punishment because He was righteous. Remember, God pours out punishment upon the generations [descendants, children] of those that choose to HATE him, not on individuals who love and obey Him).
  - **King Jehoahaz**, son of Josiah (WICKED, DIED LOST) (4th generation) 2 Kings 23:30-33
  - **King Jehoiakim**, brother of Jehoahaz, & also son of Josiah (WICKED, DIED LOST) (4th generation - first siege of Israel by Babylon. **The judgment from God began**) 2 Chronicles 36:2-8
  - **King Jehoiachin**, son of Jehoiakim (WICKED, DIED LOST) (reigned for 3 months - second siege of Israel by Babylon) 2 Chronicles 36:9-10; 2 Kings 24:8-16
  - **King Zedekiah**, brother of Jehoiakim & Jehoahaz, and also son of Josiah (WICKED, DIED LOST) (4th generation - third siege of Israel by Babylon) 2 Kings 24:15-20; 2 Kings 25:1-11; 2 Chronicles 36:10-20
23. What principle is taught in scripture on this subject of being punished for the sins of your parents? Deuteronomy 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6
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24. **Note:** The following scriptures also confirm that God punishes us according to our own sins. See Jeremiah 31:30 and Ezekiel 18:4, 20. No one is predestined to be lost. Sin is a choice and God punishes only guilty individuals.
25. Although we may inherit evil tendencies from our parents and although we are surrounded by wicked influences, what hope of overcoming sin do we have? Philippians 4:13; Luke 10:18-19
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**"It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church."** {DA 671.2}