

## Ezekiel 21—The Grieving God

### Memory Verse

Ezekiel 36:26-27 NKJV

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

### Revision and Introduction

Time is ticking on, the years are passing by. It's closer than ever to D-day, closer to the day when the Babylonian army will attack Jerusalem and destroy it in 586 BC. In Ezekiel chapter 20 we saw God compare the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem to that of a bushfire raging through a dry forest, burning up every tree, even the green ones, which represented the righteous people. Now the image switches to a sword, a flashing sword which leaves no survivors, not even the king. This sword represents the Babylonian army, which is literally on their way to Jerusalem.

In this account we also see how God is affected by the pain, misery, and death of His people. Even though God is instigating it, and He is in control of it, it doesn't mean that He likes it. God is blessed when we willingly obey, but is grieved when we disobey. Sin hurts us, but it hurts God much more. The greatest example of this is obviously the cross.

Isaiah 53:5-6 NLT paraphrase

But He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. <sup>6</sup> All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on Him the sins of us all.

### The sword of the Lord against Judah (1-5)

Ezekiel 21:1-5 NKJV

**And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, preach against the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel; <sup>3</sup> and say to the land of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Behold, I am against you, and I will draw My sword out of its sheath and cut off both righteous and wicked from you. <sup>4</sup> Because I will cut off both righteous and wicked from you, therefore My sword shall go out of its sheath against all flesh from south to north, <sup>5</sup> that all flesh may know that I, the Lord, have drawn My sword out of its sheath; it shall not return anymore.” ’**

v 3 **Behold, I am against you:** The people of Israel were, are, and always will be God's chosen people; yet that doesn't mean that God won't discipline them for their rebellions against Him. In the same way, if believers today are continue in sin, we too will find ourselves fighting against God. Why does God need to discipline us? *It's a problem of the heart;* if we persist in sin, our hearts become hard; and hard hearts must be broken.

Hebrews 3:13 NKJV

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; <sup>13</sup> but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Using the image of the potter and the clay, the only way for God to work with the persistently unfaithful nation or believer is to crush the marred or imperfect clay vessel in His hands and start over. Thus why God has to break us when we are persistently unfaithful towards Him—He is breaking our hard hearts so we can begin to hear from, and respond to, Himself again. This is also what God is doing with the nation of Israel.

Jeremiah 18:1-6 NLT paraphrase

The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, <sup>2</sup> “Go down to the potter’s shop, and I will speak to you there.” <sup>3</sup> So I did as he told me and found the potter working at his wheel. <sup>4</sup> ***But the jar he was making did not turn out as he had hoped, so He crushed it into a lump of clay again and started over.***

<sup>5</sup> Then the Lord gave me this message: <sup>6</sup> “O Israel, can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? **As the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand.**

Notice three things we can learn from these verses in Jeremiah 18:1-6:

1. **God’s discipline hurts**: who wants to be painfully **crushed** or broken by God so He can start again? Notice the word **again**. *This can happen more than once!* In fact, God promises to persevere with us, breaking or crushing us and starting over as many times as He needs to, until we learn to submit to Him and allow Him to transform us into His image—that’s God’s endgame.
2. **Hope**: because of God’s great mercy, there is always the chance to **start over**—God doesn’t throw away the imperfect jar, but instead **starts over, again and again**. As we see with the history of the nation of Israel, God has **crushed** them and remade them multiple times. We also know that God has promised multiple times that they will, at the Second Coming, fully submit to Him and walk in righteousness with Him. The history of Israel is a painful, yet beautiful picture of our sanctification.
3. **Eternal security**: I love the words, “**As the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand**”. No matter how stubborn or difficult the clay is to work with, it remains in God’s hands. God will eventually make what He wants out of us—nothing is too hard for God—He will complete the work in us which He began (see Philippians 1:6).

*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. <sup>30</sup> I and My Father are one.”* (John 10:27-30 NKJV)

*What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who can be against us?** <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? [no one] It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is he who condemns? [no one] It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. (Romans 8:31-34 NKJV)*

These verses from Romans affirm that, as believers, we have eternal right standing with God (justification); God will forever see His adopted children as perfectly righteous in a legal or positional sense. Even though in practice we still sin, the sin is already forgiven.

v 4 **I will draw My sword out of its sheath**: Remember that the sword God is using at this time to Judge the nation of Israel is the Babylonian army. God is reminding them that this judgement was from Him, and it was also being controlled and directed by Him. When we are persistently unfaithful towards God, He will often use natural means to discipline us and bring us low. We, too, must remember that those circumstances are directed by God and are therefore working for our good—producing the peaceable fruit of righteousness—even if it doesn’t feel good at the time (see Hebrews 12:7-11).

v 4 **And cut off both righteous and wicked:** This is a national and temporary judgement, and so everyone in the nation was affected. According to Jeremiah chapter 24, God had already removed most of the righteous people from Jerusalem and Judah by causing them to be taken captive to Babylon in the first two exiles. This means the most wicked people were concentrated in Jerusalem where the most severe judgements—war, famine, and disease—would occur. Nevertheless, still all the people suffered—either in exile or in the siege in Jerusalem. I’m sure Daniel and Ezekiel would much rather have been allowed to stay in their homeland rather than be taken captive to a foreign land.

“The teaching here regarding the cutting off of both righteous and wicked does not contradict the teaching of chapter 18 that only the soul that sins shall die (see Ezekiel 18:20). The former passage spoke of final judgment, while this passage speaks of temporal judgment. As regards final judgment, the righteous will not be destroyed along with the wicked. In temporal judgments, however, both often suffer equally.” (Smith)

**Application: Sin’s collateral damage:** Here, with God cutting off both the righteous and the wicked, we have a good example of how the sins of one person, or a group of people, affect those around them. Take for example an unfaithful husband who deserts his godly wife and children, and runs off with another woman. Did the wife and kids do anything wrong to deserve this brutal and painful rejection? Of course not. But the problem is that we don’t exist in isolation. Everything we do affects those around us, for good or for evil. It is good for us to keep this in mind as we remember that we are a part of Christ’s body, and that everything we do is either a blessing or a curse for others.

*But God composed the body, having given greater honour to that part which lacks it, <sup>25</sup> that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. <sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. (1 Corinthians 12:24-27 NKJV)*

v 5 **That all flesh may know that I, the Lord, have drawn My sword:** “The magnitude and severity of God’s judgment would be revelation to the watching world. They would know that only God Himself could be behind such a great judgment. The forest fire of Ezekiel 20:46–48 becomes a sword which will slay the righteous and the wicked, just as the fire would burn both green and dry tree.” (David Guzik)

v 5 **[God’s sword] shall not return anymore:** This speaks of God’s great patience with His people (see 2 Peter 3:9). God had sent many minor judgements as warnings of what would come if they didn’t repent. However, if they continued in their persistent unfaithfulness, refusing to humble themselves before God, then the “knockout” judgement would come—something that they could not ignore, something that would *force* them to come to their senses. We might call this today, “getting to the point where we can’t go any lower”, or “hitting rock bottom”, or “reaching the end of ourselves”.

### **Sin breaks God’s heart (6-7)**

**Ezekiel 21:6-7 NKJV**

**Sigh therefore, son of man, with a breaking heart, and sigh with bitterness before their eyes. <sup>7</sup> And it shall be when they say to you, ‘Why are you sighing?’ that you shall answer, ‘Because of the news; when it comes, every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it is coming and shall be brought to pass,’ says the Lord God.”**

v 6 **Sigh therefore, son of man, with a breaking heart:** “God did not want Ezekiel to be an unemotional messenger of judgment. God wanted the heart of the prophet to display the same **breaking heart** that God Himself had.” (David Guzik)

When we share the gospel with people—informing them that they are headed for hell if they don’t repent of their sins and believe that Jesus’ death was the full payment for the sins of all mankind—our genuine concern and love for them is often what makes the difference between a person receiving or rejecting the message. If we come across as arrogant, unloving, and uncaring, looking down on them and thinking that we are better than them, then they will be repulsed by us. Conversely, if we genuinely care for their desperate plight, then our love for them will be communicated by the way we talk to them and our attitude towards them. Even if they don’t agree with us, they will still appreciate our care and concern for them—they will see Christ in us, and will be drawn to Christ—...*all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love...* (John 13:35).

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**Application: “to the end of ourselves”**

We now come back to the concept of God bringing us “to the end of ourselves”, so that we will come to our senses and repent of our sin and self-sufficiency. The phrases “**with a breaking heart**” and “**every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water**” help us to understand what it means to “*come to the end of ourselves*”.

v 7 **Every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak as water:** Overall there will be great fear, panic, distress, and terror—so much so that they would literally wet themselves (**knees will be weak as water**).

v 6 **With a breaking heart:** This is literally *breaking loins*. “A phrase expressing deep emotional distress. The loins were regarded as the seat of strength, and so this represents complete nervous and physical collapse (compare Ezekiel 29:7; Psalm 69:23; Nahum 2:10).” (Taylor)

“Literally means ‘breaking of loins.’ ‘Loins’ in the OT are viewed as the centre of physical strength and the seat of emotions. When they are ‘broken,’ the strength is gone and one is helpless. The emotions are shattered.” (Alexander)

I don’t know about you, but this is where I’ve been several times. It’s not a nice place to be. However, the pain was not in vain, as today I am walking closer to the Lord than before. Hopefully, I’ve learnt my lesson enough times now to know to listen to God’s still small voice and humble my heart myself, willingly, instead of God having to crush me.

**However, this broken state is not always a result of sin.** Consider Job. He was crushed by God so he would come to a much deeper understanding and appreciation of God. In spite of how grievous Job’s trial was (see Job 1, 2), Job would not have had it any other way. This what any godly person says who has gone through severe testing in order that they may more fully depend on God alone. Consider Daniel’s three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. None of them were in a hurry to get out of the fiery furnace where they were literally in the direct presence of God. So to, when a believer learns to depend upon God to a greater degree, it always results in greater joy, a joy that the world can never take away, a joy that is not dependant on circumstances.

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v 7 **Because of the news; when it comes, every heart will melt:** How many times did the people need to be told by Jeremiah and Ezekiel that judgement, the Babylonian army, was coming? The truth is it wouldn't matter how many times—they were completely deaf to God's voice. Their hearts were so hard, and their ears so spiritually deaf, that only the actual judgement itself would get their attention—the ultimate wake up call!

This can be true for us also. Often, by not repenting when first convicted, our hearts grow hard and therefore we don't take God seriously when He says that He hates sin, and will discipline us if we continue in it. We then continue on our merry way until we hit rock bottom, when God crushes us in order to “reset” us.

v 7 **Behold it is coming and shall be brought to pass:** God's judgement of sin is certain. Those who refuse to humble themselves will suffer; eternal damnation for the unbeliever, and God's discipline for the believer and the nation of Israel.

### **The prophecy of God's sword (8-17)**

**Ezekiel 21:8-10 NKJV—Should we then make mirth?**

**<sup>8</sup> Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, <sup>9</sup> “Son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord!’ Say: ‘A sword, a sword is sharpened and also polished! <sup>10</sup> Sharpened to make a dreadful slaughter, polished to flash like lightning! Should we then make mirth? It despises the scepter of My son, as it does all wood.**

The judgement is imminent. God's sword, the Babylonian army, is ready, and when they come it would be the end of the line of the kings of Judah (**It despises the scepter**) until Jesus comes the second time. But what were the Israelites doing? Making **mirth**. Why? Because they were *complacent*, they had a *false confidence* that the Babylonians would not be able to defeat Jerusalem, a false confidence that, as God's chosen people, they could continue to live for themselves without consequence.

“In view of the fearful prospect, Ezekiel asked whether this was the hour for mirth, an hour of enjoyment and complacency. The implication was that any imagined basis for confidence was false.” (Feinberg)

This complacency or delusion is a perfect description of the Christ-rejecting world.

1 Peter 4:3-5 NLT paraphrase

You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols. **<sup>4</sup> Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do.** So they slander you. **<sup>5</sup> But remember that they will have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead.**

**Ezekiel 21:11-17 NKJV—“and I will cause My fury to rest”**

**<sup>11</sup> And He has given it to be polished, that it may be handled; this sword is sharpened, and it is polished to be given into the hand of the slayer.’**

**<sup>12</sup> “Cry and wail, son of man [see v 6]; for it will be against My people, against all the princes of Israel. Terrors including the sword will be against My people; therefore strike your thigh. <sup>13</sup> “Because it is a testing, and what if the sword despises even the scepter? The scepter shall be no more,” [see v 10] says the Lord God.**

<sup>14</sup> “You therefore, son of man, prophesy, and strike your hands together. The third time let the sword do double damage. It is the sword that slays, the sword that slays the great men, that enters their private chambers. <sup>15</sup> I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that the heart may melt and many may stumble. Ah! It is made bright; it is grasped for slaughter: <sup>16</sup> “Swords at the ready! Thrust right! Set your blade! Thrust left—wherever your edge is ordered! <sup>17</sup> “I also will beat My fists together, and I will cause My fury to rest; I, the Lord, have spoken.”

v 11 **To be given into the hands of the slayer:** God uses Babylon to execute His judgement on His hardhearted people.

v 14 **The third time let the sword do double damage:** This will be the third time that Nebuchadnezzar will invade Judah and Jerusalem. The first two times he left the city and temple intact, only taking some spoil and the best of the people. However, the third time would be different, there would be complete carnage and total destruction.

v 17 **I will cause My fury to rest:** “*This trial will last as long as it takes to pass.*” (Petra) The good thing about God is that He doesn’t hold His anger forever. Because of His merciful nature, He is always ready to shower us with His loving kindness when we return to Him. We must always remember that God’s discipline is temporary, but His favour is forever. Listen to how God reassures His people Israel, and therefore us also.

Isaiah 54:7-8 NKJV

“For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. <sup>8</sup> With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,” says the Lord, your Redeemer.

Jeremiah 31:33-37 NLT paraphrase

“But this is the **new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days,**” says the Lord. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. <sup>34</sup> And they will not need to teach their neighbours, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, ‘You should know the Lord.’ For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already,” says the Lord. **“And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.”**

<sup>35</sup> It is the Lord who provides the sun to light the day and the moon and stars to light the night, and who stirs the sea into roaring waves. His name is the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, and this is what he says: <sup>36</sup> **“I am as likely to reject my people Israel as I am to abolish the laws of nature!”**

<sup>37</sup> This is what the Lord says: “Just as the heavens cannot be measured and the foundations of the earth cannot be explored, so **I will not consider casting them away for the evil they have done. I, the Lord, have spoken!**”

Psalms 103:8-14 NKJV

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and **abounding in mercy.** <sup>9</sup> He will not always strive with us, **nor will He keep His anger forever.** <sup>10</sup> **He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.**

<sup>11</sup> For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; <sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

<sup>13</sup> As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. <sup>14</sup> For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

## **Ezekiel 21:18-23 NKJV—A demonstration of God's sovereignty**

**18** The word of the Lord came to me again, saying: **19** “And son of man, appoint for yourself two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to go; both of them shall go from the same land. Make a sign; put it at the head of the road to the city. **20** Appoint a road for the sword to go to Rabbah of the Ammonites, and to Judah, into fortified Jerusalem. **21** For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, he looks at the liver. **22** In his right hand is the divination for Jerusalem: to set up battering rams, to call for a slaughter, to lift the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to heap up a siege mound, and to build a wall. **23** And it will be to them like a false divination in the eyes of those who have sworn oaths with them; but he will bring their iniquity to remembrance, that they may be taken.

v 19 **Appoint for yourself two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to go:** God's sword, Nebuchadnezzar, was on the move. He was at a crossroads, with one road going to **Rabbah** (modern Amman in Jordan) **of the Ammonites**, and the other **to Judah, into fortified Jerusalem: to set up battering rams, to call for a slaughter, to lift the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to heap up a siege mound, and to build a wall.**

Just imagine Nebuchadnezzar trying to decide which way to go; shall I go and destroy Rabbah, the capital of the people of Ammon, or, shall I go and destroy Jerusalem. But is it really his decision to make?

*The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.* (Proverbs 21:1 NKJV)

v 19 **Make a sign:** “The use of *yad* (lit. “hand”) for signpost suggests a roadsign on which is carved the form of a hand with fingers pointing in the direction specified.” (Block)

v 21 **At the parting of the road... he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, he looks at the liver:** Nebuchadnezzar is using several pagan methods of divination to decide which way to go.

— **He shakes the arrows:** This is basically casting lots using two inscribed arrows. They would believe that their gods would cause them to pick the right one.

— **He consults the images:** They would literally ask their idols, some of which were designed like a whispering wall. A priest would, unseen by the king or worshiper, whisper what the king wanted to hear and the sound would travel so the king could hear it—it would seem that the idol had spoken.

— **He looks at the liver:** “Here we have a truly authentic Babylonian divinatory process, which had come into Canaan. A ‘science’ had grown up around this divinatory technique. It also spawned a professional priesthood that confidently predicted a proper course of action by examining the colour and the internal segmentation of the livers of newly slaughtered animals.” (Vawter and Hoppe)

“Even Nebuchadnezzar's superstition was overruled by God in order to carry out His purpose on Judah (for Babylon's divinations see Isa. 47:8–15). The king thought he was deciding by the help of his gods, but God was determining the course of his action.” (Feinberg)

Consider what people use today to try to decide what is the best course of action: horoscopes, fortune tellers, taro cards, ouija boards, seances, or even a word from a false prophet. If God wishes, He can overrule any of these methods of false divination.

v 22 **In his right hand is the divination for Jerusalem:** God directs Nebuchadnezzar to go to Jerusalem.

v 23 **And it will be to them [Judah] like a false divination:** They would have been praying for God to stop Nebuchadnezzar from coming, that he would go to Ammon instead. They would have thought that the pagan gods had overridden God, but it was actually God's will that was done.

**Ezekiel 21:24-27—God exalts the humble, but humbles the proud**

<sup>24</sup> **“Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Because you have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your doings your sins appear—because you have come to remembrance, you shall be taken in hand.**

<sup>25</sup> **‘Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end,** <sup>26</sup> **thus says the Lord God: “Remove the turban, and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted.** <sup>27</sup> **Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him.” ’**

v 24 **Because you have made your iniquity to be remembered:** Their sin was not hidden, they were not ashamed, and they had no desire to obey God. The people, including the king, were, proud, arrogant, and haughty—**Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel.** Such blatant sin will not go unpunished by God.

v 25 **Whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end:** As God says in Numbers 32:23, *your sin will find you out.* Your day will come, your time of sinning will end. Those who persist in unfaithfulness will be shamed and ashamed. Life will never be the same—the blessings that God gave will be taken away. **Remove the turban,** which was worn by the high priest, refers to the temporary cessation of the priesthood. **And take off the crown,** which was worn by the king, refers to the King Zedekiah being dethroned (see Exodus 28:4, 37, 39; 29:6; 39:28, 31; Leviticus 8:9; 16:4).

v 26 **Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted:** This is likely a prophecy depicting Zedekiah being humbled (eyes put out etc), but the previously exiled king, Jeconiah, in the 37th year of his captivity, being freed from prison and exalted above all the captive kings in Babylon by Merodach in the first year of his reign (see 2 Kings 25:27–29; Jeremiah 52:31).

In addition to this, God exalting the humble and humbling the proud it is also a principle that we see throughout the Scriptures—see Job 22:29, Psalm 138:6, Proverbs 3:34, Matthew 23:12, and 1 Peter 5:5. Again, better to humble yourself willingly than God having to crush you. Better to bow to Jesus willingly than to be forced to bow when it's too late (see Philippians 2:10-11, Isaiah 45:23).

**A Messianic prophecy concerning the Second Coming of Christ**

v 27 **I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him:** What this means is that, from the time when king Nebuchadnezzar defeated and humbled king Zedekiah, there will be no more kings in Jerusalem ruling over Israel until Jesus comes at His Second coming and sets up His kingdom on earth—only Jesus has this **right**—only Jesus is worthy to take the scroll and loose the seals (see Revelation 5).



“From Zedekiah down to the Lord Jesus there has been no one in the line of David who ever sat on that throne. Ezekiel is saying that no one would ever be able to do so. The Lord Jesus is the only One who will. Right now He is sitting at God’s right hand, waiting until His enemies are made His footstool when He comes to this earth to rule.” (McGee)

“The coming of the Lord for His church in the rapture is recalled in every celebration of the Lord’s Supper: ‘till He come.’ Israel also has an ‘until He come.’ The Messiah will restore access to God in high-priestly ministry and righteous rule in royal ministry.” (Feinberg)

Again, what grace! Always at the darkest points in Israel’s history, God chooses to reveal, remind, or confirm His promises. Not only would Israel once more have a king, but the king would be God Himself, ruling over the entire earth. This is also good news for us the church, who will come back with Jesus, and will also rule and reign alongside Jesus for the 1,000 year Millennial reign on earth.

Revelation 19:11-16 NKJV—The second coming

<sup>11</sup> Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. <sup>13</sup> He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called **The Word of God**. <sup>14</sup> And **the armies in heaven**, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. <sup>15</sup> Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. **And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron**. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. <sup>16</sup> And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

**KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**

Revelation 20:6 NKJV—The Millennial Reign

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

### **Judgement against the nation of Ammon**

The ammonites lived in what is now modern day Jordan on the opposite side of the Jordan river. They were related to Israel, being Lot’s descendants. Yet, they shared the same *ancient hatred* towards Israel as do all their other relatives, who we know today as the Arabs—the descendants of Ishmael, Esau etc. The hatred of the Arab nations against Israel is no secret, and it goes back to Abraham’s day when Ishmael persecuted Isaac (see Genesis 21:9 and Galatians 4:9).

<sup>28</sup> “**And you, son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God concerning the Ammonites and concerning their reproach,’ and say: ‘A sword, a sword is drawn, polished for slaughter, for consuming, for flashing—** <sup>29</sup> **While they see false visions for you, while they divine a lie to you, to bring you on the necks of the wicked, the slain whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end.**

<sup>30</sup> **‘Return it to its sheath. I will judge you in the place where you were created, in the land of your nativity. <sup>31</sup> I will pour out My indignation on you; I will blow against you with the fire of My wrath, and deliver you into the hands of brutal men who are skilful to destroy. <sup>32</sup> You shall be fuel for the fire; your blood shall be in the midst of the land. You shall not be remembered, for I the Lord have spoken.’ ”**

v 28 **Thus says the Lord God concerning the Ammonites:** You can imagine the Ammonites breathing a sigh of relief that king Nebuchadnezzar wasn't coming their way. They would have thanked their gods, and thought that all was well as they enjoyed their false sense of security—**While they see false visions for you, while they divine a lie to you** (v 29). Well, things were good for a time, but five years later it was their turn to suffer destruction at the hands of the Babylonian war machine—but there would be no coming back for them, no return to the land. *It is a dangerous thing to mistake God's patience for His approval.*

v 31 **I will pour out My indignation on you; I will blow against you with the fire of My wrath, and deliver you into the hands of brutal men who are skilful to destroy:** Why? Because they were always out to destroy Israel. *"This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Because you clapped and danced and cheered with glee at the destruction of my people, <sup>7</sup> I will raise my fist of judgment against you. I will give you as plunder to many nations. I will cut you off from being a nation and destroy you completely. Then you will know that I am the Lord"* (Ezekiel 25:6-7 NLT paraphrase).

v 32 **You shall not be remembered:** "Their ultimate fate will be worse than Israel's and worse even than Egypt's, for they will be *no more remembered*. To the Semitic [Jewish] mind nothing could be more terrible: no prospect of restoration, no continuance in succeeding generations, no memorial, not even a memory. Oblivion." (Taylor)

Remember what God promised to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you" (Genesis 12:3). Please pray that our leaders will recognise Israel as God's chosen people so our nation can be blessed.

## Conclusion

- Sin grieves and hurts God more than we can imagine because:
  - Firstly, it's hard for parents to discipline their children, and even more so for God because He loves us so much more than our earthly parents ever could
  - Secondly, God's great desire is to bless us and it grieves Him when we settle for second best.
  - Thirdly, every sin I commit is a sin Jesus had to pay for.
- Persistent sin hardens our hearts and in a practical way turns God against us: When we continue in sin we are walking in a way which is opposite to God. This is the opposite of *abiding* in Christ. If obedience and abiding lead to joy (see John 15:9-10), then disobedience leads to misery and suffering, as we are clearly seeing with the nation of Israel as our example.
- Grace! In Israel's darkest hour, caused by their own deep rebellion against God, God graciously gives them a glorious promise that gives them hope for the future. As the church waits and longs for the rapture, so Israel is waiting and longing for the Second Coming when Jesus will take them as His own people, and they will no longer rebel against Him and deny Him.
- Sin causes collateral damage. Because none of us live in isolation, what we do affects those around us, for good or for evil. Therefore, the righteous suffer the physical consequences of sin along with the wicked, but are of course eternally safe in God's hands.