

Ezekiel 7:15-27—You Cannot Serve Both God And Money

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. ²⁷ 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—Yahweh *makkeh*

Last week we learned that God revealed Himself to Israel by a new name—Yahweh *makkeh*: The Lord who strikes the blow. The Word of God reveals to us that God is faithful to keep His promises. One of those promises is our sanctification, to cause us to grow into the image of the Messiah, Jesus, Emanuel, our God who became a man:

“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6 NKJV)

“We are assured and know that [God being a partner in their labor] all things work together and are [fitting into a plan] for good to, and for, those who love God and are called according to [His] design and purpose.

29 For those whom He foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand], He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might become the firstborn among many brethren.” (Romans 8:28-29 AMP)

In order for this to happen, at the moment of salvation, we are automatically enrolled into God's “school of sanctification”, from which all born again believers in Christ, without exception, graduate with a perfect score—we will all eventually be perfect in Christ Jesus. Graduation day is either when we die, or when we are raptured, whichever comes first. In God's “school of sanctification”, we learn to be followers of Christ, meaning that:

- we learn to put God first (Luke 14:25-33)
- we grow in holiness (increasingly free from the power of sin—Ephesians 5:26-27)
- we learn to seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33)
- we learn to abide or remain in the love of God (Jude 21)
- our minds are transformed and renewed as we read the Word of God (Romans 12:2)

Of course, this doesn't happen naturally, as our sin nature is in complete rebellion against God,—“*For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will*” (Romans 8:7 NLT).

Now, from God's point of view, it's the “school of sanctification”, but from our point of view, as Children of God, we perceive it to be the “school of discipline”, “the school of life”, or the “school of hard knocks”, where God, according to His perfect plan, leads us into seasons of persecution, tribulation, and temptation (all designed to strengthen us, not destroy us). This school is very practical, and there are classes all day, every day.

Last week, one of the lessons we learned is that God takes away the things we love more than Him so we will seek after Him instead (remember the story of the horse with the sore eye); it's always for our own good—even if it doesn't feel good. Consider the following verses from Hebrews:

Hebrews 12:6-8 AMP

For the Lord corrects and disciplines everyone whom He loves, and He punishes, even scourges, every son whom He accepts and welcomes to His heart and cherishes. ⁷ You must submit to and endure [correction] for discipline: God is dealing with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not [thus] train and correct and discipline? ⁸ Now if you are exempt from correction and left without discipline in which all [of God's children] share, then you are illegitimate offspring and not true sons [at all]. [Prov. 3:11, 12.]

So Yahweh *makkeh* is the divine principal of the “school of sanctification”, in which all believers in Christ are enrolled and from which all graduate with a perfect score—perfection.

Revision—The Big Picture

As we go through Ezekiel chapters 5-8, we are watching God reveal the sins of the Israelites as He explains why they are so deserving of judgement. I don't know about you, but it doesn't only convict them, it also convicts me, *and that's the whole point*. It's like God is peeling back the outer layer of our sinful hearts and revealing to us the utter depravity that is inside all of us. The Bible describes the evil part of us in several ways; some examples are—our sinful nature, the flesh, the old man, and the body of sin.

Consider that the events recorded in the Old Testament are not just there for information purposes, but rather are there for us to learn lessons from. Remember that we are far better off if we can learn from someone else's mistake, rather than having to make the same mistake ourselves. God, through His Word, gives us this opportunity.

1 Corinthians 10:6-11 NKJV

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷ And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “*The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.*” ⁸ Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹ nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰ nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition [instruction], upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

What's the warning here? Sin will be judged. Yes, God is exceedingly patient as He gives us chance upon chance to repent, but eventually He will have to judge our sin if we continue to harden our hearts and refuse to repent. Remember that while we should be willing to forsake all things, including all sin (this is the initial repentance that leads to salvation), usually God tends to work on one area of our life at a time. You and I will most likely feel God convicting us of a particular sin or weakness—watching TV, movies, computer games, social media, alcohol, drugs, pride, sexual immorality, anger, violence, unforgiveness, hatred, wrath, laziness, gossip, lack of faith/unbelief, having idols (e.g. family, sport, work, hobbies, which become more important than God) etc. When we gain victory over that sin, then God will lead us to grow in another area of our lives.

Again, it feels like God is peeling back the outer layer of my desperately sinful and deceived heart (Jeremiah 17:9) and showing me what's inside. It's not a pretty picture. It's not fun. It's not easy. But remember that the Word of God is like a mirror (see James 1:22-25). We are to look into it to see who we really are, and, when we get a glimpse, we should cry out to God to change us as we grow to hate our old sinful selves. We should be desperate to grow and change to be like Christ. How? Read the Word of God and obey it.

1 Peter 2:1-3 NLT paraphrase

So get rid of all evil behaviour. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech. ² Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk [the Word of God] so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, ³ now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness.

This Week—You Can't Serve Both God And Money

This week, we will see another big sin or temptation that caused the Israelite's affections toward God to diminish—material prosperity. ***At its heart the desire for material wealth is all about the desire to be comfortable; meaning to be free from pain, poverty, and persecution—to live the good life, to be “secure”.*** We will see that materialism is a greater challenge to our walk with God than the common challenges of persecution, tribulation, and temptation, and that it actually increases our propensity to commit other sins, especially sexual sin.

Ezekiel 7:14-27 NKJV

¹⁴ 'They have blown the trumpet and made everyone ready, but no one goes to battle; for My wrath is on all their multitude. ¹⁵ The sword is outside, and the pestilence and famine within. Whoever is in the field will die by the sword; and whoever is in the city, famine and pestilence will devour him. ¹⁶ 'Those who survive will escape and be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, each for his iniquity. ¹⁷ Every hand will be feeble, and every knee will be as weak as water. ¹⁸ They will also be girded with sackcloth; horror will cover them; shame will be on every face, baldness on all their heads.

¹⁹ 'They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be like refuse; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they will not satisfy their souls, nor fill their stomachs, because it became their stumbling block of iniquity. ²⁰ 'As for the beauty of his ornaments, He set it in majesty; but they made from it the images of their abominations—their detestable things; therefore I have made it like refuse to them. ²¹ I will give it as plunder into the hands of strangers, and to the wicked of the earth as spoil; and they shall defile it. ²² I will turn My face from them, and they will defile My secret place; for robbers shall enter it and defile it. ²³ 'Make a chain, for the land is filled with crimes of blood, and the city is full of violence. ²⁴ Therefore I will bring the worst of the Gentiles, and they will possess their houses; I will cause the pomp of the strong to cease, and their holy places shall be defiled.

²⁵ Destruction comes; They will seek peace, but there shall be none. ²⁶ Disaster will come upon disaster, and rumour will be upon rumour. Then they will seek a vision from a prophet; but the law will perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders. ²⁷ 'The king will mourn, the prince will be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the common people will tremble.

I will do to them according to their way, and according to what they deserve I will judge them; then they shall know that I am the Lord!' ”

Then You Shall Know that I Am the Lord

Remember the key phrase that gives the context of the whole chapter—“**then they shall know that I am the Lord.**” It means more than just that they will know that God exists, rather, they will seek God again, repent of their sins, and be restored to fellowship with God. This is God's overall purpose for the judgement. Remember that God's judgements are always corrective, not punitive.

The coming judgement on those remaining in Jerusalem

Ezekiel 7:15-16 NKJV

The sword is outside, and the pestilence and famine within. Whoever is in the field will die by the sword; and whoever is in the city, famine and pestilence will devour him. ¹⁶ ‘Those who survive will escape and be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, each for his iniquity.

We saw this threefold judgement—famine, war, and exile, described in previous chapters. The people remaining in Jerusalem who were still able to worship at the temple weren't the lucky ones, although they thought they were. They were the rebels, the “bad figs”, set aside by God for judgement. The “good figs”, including the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel, had already been removed in the previous two exiles and were living in Babylon.

Ezekiel 7:17-18 NKJV

¹⁷ Every hand will be feeble, and every knee will be as weak as water. ¹⁸ They will also be girded with sackcloth; horror will cover them; shame will be on every face, baldness on all their heads.

Last week we studied verse 14 which describes the situation where no-one went to battle when the trumpet was blown. We saw a practical application where sin in one area of our life makes us unable to fight sin in other areas of our lives. Here, in the following verses, the picture is further developed.

v 17 **Every hand will be feeble**: Again, a picture of the weakness that sin brings to our character. No-one goes to battle—why?—because they are too weak.

v 17 **Every knee will be as weak as water**: “There is a vivid account of the panic that will follow. The RSV's ‘all knees [are] weak as water’ means ‘all knees will run water’: a euphemism for the loss of bladder control in moments of terror.” (Vawter and Hoppe)

“However, the LXX [Septuagint] translators have captured its sense: ‘and all their knees will run with urine.’ The prophet is hereby referring to the loss of bladder control that occurs in a moment of extreme crisis.” (Block)

v 18 **Horror [shuddering, shaking, trembling] will cover them**: This is just another way to describe the fear, dread, anxiety, panic, alarm, and fright that they will experience when their sin is brought out into the open and they are judged or disciplined by God.

v 18 **Shame will be on every face**: When the sin is finally judged, all who share in the sin will share in its **shame**. **Shame** is “the painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, a condition of humiliating disgrace or disrepute, and the feeling of regret” (dictionary). No-one likes feeling shame. Obedience leads to honour, disobedience to shame. If we want to be able to hold our heads high and shine as lights in this dark world, then we need to walk in obedience, having nothing to hide.

2 Corinthians 4:2 AMP

We have renounced disgraceful ways (secret thoughts, feelings, desires and underhandedness, the methods and arts that men hide through shame); we refuse to deal craftily (to practice trickery and cunning) or to adulterate or handle dishonestly the Word of God, but we state the truth openly (clearly and candidly). And so we commend ourselves in the sight and presence of God to every man's conscience [no shame].

v 17, 18 **Feeble... weak... shame:** This is what sin does to a person. It takes someone who is strong, bold, and victorious over sin, and through deception gains a foothold in their life. Then the person, if they remain unrepentant, becomes more and more deceived, until, like we saw with Sampson last week, one day they find themselves completely ensnared and destroyed by their sin. The sin they thought they could control and enjoy without consequence was now controlling them. Where they thought they were strong, they found themselves to be weak. Boldness gives way to fear, confidence to insecurity. They didn't take heed of a very clear warning given in the Scriptures:

Therefore let anyone who thinks he stands [who feels sure that he has a steadfast mind and is standing firm], take heed lest he fall [into sin]. (1 Corinthians 10:12 AMP)

But does it have to be this way? No. Listen to what God says in the book of Hebrews after He has described how He disciplines us as a father does his children whom he loves:

Hebrews 12:12-13 NLT paraphrase

So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. ¹³ Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.

Now you ask, "How do I find this straight path to walk down so I can become strong again?" I'm glad you asked. You'll find the answer in the Word of God (If you are ever looking for reasons to read the Bible, Psalm 119 describes just about all of them).

Psalm 119:9-11, 36-37, 45, 105 NKJV

How can a young man cleanse his way?

By taking heed according to Your word.

¹⁰ With my whole heart I have sought You;

Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!

¹¹ Your word I have hidden in my heart,

That I might not sin against You.

³⁶ Incline my heart to Your testimonies,

And not to covetousness.

³⁷ Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things,

And revive me in Your way.

⁴⁵ And I will walk at liberty [freedom],

For I seek Your precepts.

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet

And a light to my path.

The danger of materialism—You can't serve both God and money

Ezekiel 7:19-22 NKJV

¹⁹ 'They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be like refuse; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they will not satisfy their souls, nor fill their stomachs, because it became their stumbling block of iniquity. ²⁰ 'As for the beauty of his ornaments, He set it in majesty; but they made from it the images of their abominations—their

detestable things; therefore I have made it like refuse to them. ²¹ I will give it as plunder into the hands of strangers, and to the wicked of the earth as spoil; and they shall defile it. ²² I will turn My face from them, and they will defile My secret place; for robbers shall enter it and defile it.

v 19 **Their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord:** So much for wealth making you secure! The rich thought that they were invincible, that because they had lots of money they were secure and could not be touched. However, **in the day of the wrath of the Lord**, both rich and poor will be judged the same. Their money will be of no help. In the light of eternity, money is useless. When people come to this realisation “**they will throw their silver into the streets.**” The best way to overcome covetousness is to learn to become generous.

v 19 **They will throw their silver into the streets:** “As burdensome, and not beneficial to them. Thus Judas threw away his wages of wickedness; and many, on their deathbeds, detest their cursed hoards of ill gotten goods, saying unto them, as once Charles V did, *Abite hinc, abite longe*, Away from me, away, away.” (Trapp)

“Generally silver and gold stand for much among the children of men; they are the keys to the unlocking of the treasures of life. But when the supreme crises come; when all hands are feeble, and all knees weak as water; when the day of the wrath of the Lord breaks—there is no help in silver and gold; they cannot satisfy or save.” (Meyer)

Application—They will not satisfy their souls, nor fill their stomachs (v 19):

I was talking to a group of students one day and asking them why people were so keen to be like the so-called superstars, the rich and famous musicians, actors, or at the top of their game in sports. Just have a good look at how these people actually live—many commit suicide, many are depressed, most hate their lives and cope only by substance (drug and alcohol) abuse or by indulging in other sexual sins. Their lives are **EMPTY!** *Remember this truth and take it to heart—your wealth will not satisfy you in the long term—the marketing is false—it’s like a mirage in the desert. You’ll get there, achieving your financial goals, but you will find no satisfaction—you will always need more, and more, and more.* So what if my house is paid off, so what if I have money in the bank, so what if I can afford to go on holidays, so what if I can buy the latest gadgets—what good are those things if I am empty on the inside. ***The only thing that will truly satisfy me is a genuine, day by day, intimate, walk with God.*** We may say, “I know that”, but reality can often paint a different picture.

I need to look at my life and ask myself, ***how much time am I investing to achieve financial security vs how much time am I investing in my relationship with God*** (in the Word, in prayer, in fellowship, in service to God). For many believers in this western materialistic world, an honest appraisal of how we spend our time will only confirm the following truths:

Matthew 6:24 NLT paraphrase

No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

Romans 6:16 NLT paraphrase

Don’t you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

It's worth reading a little of what Jesus taught about the subject of money.

Matthew 6:19-34 NLT paraphrase

“Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ **Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.**

²² “Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy [not greedy, materialistic, covetous], your whole body is filled with light. ²³ But when your eye is unhealthy [greedy, materialistic, covetous], your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is! [see Romans 6:16 above—this is talking about our motivations and priorities—I'm only thinking about money and how to get more of it]

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money. [We either serve sin or God—Romans 6:16]

²⁵ “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear [some of the things money can buy]. Isn't life more than food [and money], and your body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸ “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, **He will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?**

³¹ “So don't worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear? [the things money can buy]’ ³² **These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.** ³³ **Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.**

³⁴ “So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Someone said, “Money is a good slave, but a terrible master.” There are so many people today who worry about money issues—they have made money their master. As Jesus said, “[**God**] **will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?**”

v 19 **Because it became their stumbling block of iniquity:** “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” (1 Timothy 6:10 NKJV)

Isn't it interesting that money is the root or cause of all kinds of other sins. We'll talk more about this later. For now just understand that while the money of the covetous will get them into trouble; it can not rescue them from that trouble.

v 20 **Therefore I have made it like refuse to them:** “The word here and in verse 19 translated **refuse** refers to sexual impurity, such as the ritual uncleanness associated with menstruation.” (David Guzik)

Refuse: “This word, *nidda*, belongs to the language of female impurity and expresses the revulsion that will be felt not only towards their wealth, but also towards *their beautiful ornament* (20, rsv), i.e. their expensively decked idols.” (Taylor)

Today we could think of the things we have bought with our money—cars, houses, holidays—even those things will eventually become repulsive to us if we allow money to be our master and diminish our relationship with God.

v 20 **As for the beauty of his ornaments, He set it in majesty; but they made from it the images of their abominations—their detestable things:** This is the same cycle that you'll find in the book of Judges: God blesses, the people turn away from God, God disciplines them, the people repent, and so it goes on, around and around, the merry-go-round of materialism (depending on and finding security in riches rather than God).

It's terrible when you think about it. God blesses us with material wealth, but we go and use it selfishly. Then God has to discipline us, and we (often) lose it—all that wealth is given **as plunder into the hands of strangers.**

v 22 **They will defile my secret place; for robbers shall enter it and defile it:** The Babylonians had already taken many of the gold articles used in the temple, but this time they would also strip the gold off the walls and other parts of the temple. Depending on the price of gold and silver, someone has estimated that in today's money, the Babylonians would have taken about 200 billion dollars worth of silver and gold from the temple. They really did “strike it rich”.

All human help will fail

Ezekiel 7:23-27 NKJV

‘Make a chain, for the land is filled with crimes of blood, and the city is full of violence. ²⁴ Therefore I will bring the worst of the Gentiles, and they will possess their houses; I will cause the pomp of the strong to cease, and their holy places shall be defiled.

²⁵ Destruction comes; They will seek peace, but there shall be none. ²⁶ Disaster will come upon disaster, and rumour will be upon rumour. Then they will seek a vision from a prophet; but the law will perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders. ²⁷ ‘The king will mourn, the prince will be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the common people will tremble.

I will do to them according to their way, and according to what they deserve I will judge them; then they shall know that I am the Lord!’ ”

v 23 **Make a chain, for the land is filled with crimes of blood:** God here tells Ezekiel to make a chain. A chain is used to restrain criminals. God is going to use the Babylonians, **the worse of the gentiles**, to chain up or restrain the violent people who have been shedding blood either through murders, violence, and oppression, including corrupt judges condemning the innocent. The chain would also be used to bind the prisoners (those who survived the famine and war) as they were led to Babylon. “The ‘chain’ would have been used to tie the captives together to form a long train headed for exile.” (Block)

v 24 **Therefore I will bring the worst of the Gentiles:** This is what Habakkuk struggled with (Habakkuk 1:12-17). The Jews were bad, but the Babylonians were worse. It doesn't seem fair, but God promised to also judge the Babylonians later on. God knows what He's doing; He is sovereign—God is in control.

Application: Where are the false prophets now?

v 25 **They will seek peace, but there shall be none:** The false prophets with their false prophecies which promised false hope and gave a false peace cannot help the people when it's time for judgement.

v 26 **Then they will seek a vision from a prophet; but the law will perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders:** When it became clear that the false prophets were false, it was too late. God wasn't talking to them any more. As we talked about last week, God's patience has limits, and there was no more mercy for the people at this stage.

"Ezekiel 7:26 seems to be an answer to what was said in Jerusalem at the time, as recorded by Jeremiah 18:18: Then they said, "Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come and let us attack him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words." (David Guzik) The following Scripture from Jeremiah describes the situation well.

Jeremiah 8:4-15 NLT paraphrase

Deception by False Prophets

⁴ "Jeremiah, say to the people, 'This is what the Lord says:

" 'When people fall down, don't they get up again?

When they discover they're on the wrong road, don't they turn back [repent]?

⁵ Then why do these people stay on their self-destructive path?

Why do the people of Jerusalem refuse to turn back [repent]?

They cling tightly to their lies and will not turn around.

⁶ I listen to their conversations and don't hear a word of truth.

Is anyone sorry for doing wrong? Does anyone say, "What a terrible thing I have done"?

No! All are running down the path of sin as swiftly as a horse galloping into battle!

⁷ Even the stork that flies across the sky knows the time of her migration, as do the turtledove, the swallow, and the crane. They all return at the proper time each year. But not my people! They do not know the Lord's laws.

⁸ " **'How can you say, "We are wise because we have the word of the Lord," when your teachers [the false teachers and false prophets] have twisted it by writing lies?**

⁹ **These [so-called] wise teachers will fall into the trap of their own foolishness, for they have rejected the word of the Lord. Are they so wise after all?** ¹⁰ I will give their wives to others and their farms to strangers.

From the least to the greatest, their lives are ruled by greed [they are seeking the gift not the giver, they are seeking to be blessed by God, and not to be a blessing to God].

Yes, even my prophets and priests are like that. They are all frauds. ¹¹ They offer superficial treatments for my people's mortal wound. They give assurances of peace when there is no peace.

¹² Are they ashamed of these disgusting actions? Not at all—they don't even know how to blush! Therefore, they will lie among the slaughtered. They will be brought down when I punish them, says the Lord.

¹³ I will surely consume them. There will be no more harvests of figs and grapes. Their fruit trees will all die. **Whatever I gave them will soon be gone.** I, the Lord, have spoken!’

¹⁴ “Then the people will say, ‘Why should we wait here to die? Come, let’s go to the fortified towns and die there. For the Lord our God has decreed our destruction and has given us a cup of poison to drink because we sinned against the Lord.

¹⁵ **We hoped for peace, but no peace came. We hoped for a time of healing, but found only terror.’**

The Israelites had truly reaped what they had sown. They had ignored God and put their trust in the false prophets instead. The false prophets’ message was an easy one—they told the people that God would bless them and that they didn’t have to repent. Like the Jewish leaders in Jesus day, the people at first *would* not believe (John 12:37), therefore, later, they *could* not believe (John 12:39), because their hearts had become hard. We can either say to God, “Your will be done”, as we willingly submit to Him and choose to accept His invitation to be adopted into His family, or, God will say to the unbeliever at judgement time, “your will be done”, as He honours their free choice to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire.

Application: God’s judgment is always fair—According to what they deserve I will judge them:

v 27 **According to what they deserve I will judge them:** For Israel, this was a terrible promise. The nation had sinned greatly, so a great judgment was coming upon them.

v 27 **According to what they deserve I will judge them:** This is not what you want to hear when you are about to be judged. For anyone who is not saved, this is what they will hear at the Great White Throne Judgement. Remember that the wages of sin is death—spending eternity separated from God suffering in the Lake of Fire or Hell (Romans 6:23).

v 27 **Then they shall know that I am the Lord!** “The triple repetition in this chapter makes the point strongly. God’s purpose was not Israel’s pain, but their restoration to true relationship with Him.” (David Guzik)

Conclusion: Material prosperity is a snare

Ezekiel 16:49-50 NKJV

Look, this [material prosperity] was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had **pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness**; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. ⁵⁰ And they were **haughty and committed abomination** before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.

Riches are a snare because it is so easy to trust in them instead of God, and they also give us more time and opportunity to sin. Riches can condemn us, but cannot save us.

Matthew 19:23-26 NLT paraphrase

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the truth, it is very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. ²⁴ I’ll say it again—it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!”

²⁵ The disciples were astounded. “Then who in the world can be saved?” they asked.

²⁶ Jesus looked at them intently and said, **“Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible.”**