



Book of Ezekiel

Chapter 5

Theme: Judgment of Jerusalem

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The Lord also told Ezekiel to shave all of the hair off his head and face and to divide the hair into three equal parts. He was to burn one third, cut up another third with a sword, and throw the remaining third into the wind. These actions were to symbolize the coming destruction and exile of Jerusalem's residents. At the same time Ezekiel was to preserve a few strands of hair in the folds of his garment, symbolizing the remnant that would survive the judgment. However, to show the severity and extent of God's judgment, he was to throw some of these strands into the fire.

Jerusalem's sin would be the cause of its downfall. Despite their privileged status, God's people rebelled against the Lord's commandments and polluted the temple with idols. God's judgment would be so severe that the starved people would resort to eating their own family members. Two-thirds of the city's population would perish by famine and the sword, while the other third would go into exile. The surrounding nations would hold Jerusalem up as an object of ridicule.¹

Ezekiel is communicating through object lessons; trying to get across to the people they should expect to be in siege conditions.

Ezekiel 5:1

And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair.

Figurative of sweeping the city clean of its inhabitants Isa 7:20; Jer 41:5
Divine justice is accurate.

[And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife ...] This is the 4th prophecy in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 5:1-17, fulfilled). The next prophecy in Ezekiel 6:1. Part of the prophecy was by pantomime.

[knife] *chereb* should be sword.

[hair] - hair was a sign of consecration of a priest, Lev 21:4-5. It was the symbol of a Nazarite vow. In Jer 41 it was a sign of catastrophe. From Job 1, Isa 22, and Jer 7, it was a sign of mourning.

Missler: Ezekiel was to take 3 balances, implying the just discrimination with which God weighs out the portion of punishment allotted to each. He was then to divide his hair into 3 thirds; and what happened to that hair was symbolic of what was being predicted would happen to the Israelites.²

Dockery, D. S., Butler, T. C., Church, C. L., Scott, L. L., Ellis Smith, M. A., White, J. E., & Holman Bible Publishers (Nashville, T. (1992). *Holman Bible Handbook* (434). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

² Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, khouse.org

LAN: 1-10 Shaving one's head and beard signified mourning, humiliation, and repentance. God told Ezekiel to shave his head and beard and then to divide the hair into three parts, symbolizing what was going to happen to the people in Jerusalem (see Ezekiel 5:12). Along with verbal prophecies, God asked Ezekiel to use dramatic visual images to command the people's attention and to burn an indelible impression on their minds. Just as God gave Ezekiel creative ways to communicate his message to the exiles, we can creatively communicate the Good News about God to a lost generation.³

Shave your head and your beard. He must surely have been a colorful sight there to these people. No doubt they took notice. They would have a hard time not observing.

thine head—as representative of the Jews. The whole hair being shaven off was significant of severe and humiliating (2Sa 10:4, 5) treatment. Especially in the case of a priest; for priests (Le 21:5) were forbidden “to make baldness on their head,” their hair being the token of consecration; hereby it was intimated that the ceremonial must give place to the moral.⁴

God told Ezekiel to shave his head and beard with a sharp sword. “Sword” (*hereb*) is the common word for the weapon used by ancient armies. Ezekiel used the word 83 times in his book to speak of the means by which Jerusalem (cf. 6:11), Edom (25:13), Tyre (26:6, 8), Egypt (29:8-9; 30:4), and Gog (38:21) would be destroyed. Shaving one's head (and beard) was a sign of mourning (Job 1:20; Isa. 15:2-3; Jer. 7:29; 48:37; Ezek. 7:18), humiliation (2 Sam. 10:4-5), and possibly repentance (Jer. 41:5). No doubt all these were implied in Ezekiel's actions.

After Ezekiel shaved, he was to use a set of scales for weighing his hair in three equal piles with a few strands left over. He did this possibly sometime near the end of his previous two signs. But he did nothing else till the 430 days of his symbolic siege had ended.⁵

Shaving one's head and beard was a serious matter for a priest or a Nazirite because one's hair was a sign of consecration to God (Lv 19:27; 21:5; Nm 6:5). Samson, a Nazirite from birth, allowed his head to be shorn by a harlot; his disregard for his vow resulted in the loss of his physical strength and spiritual power (Jdg 16:17). Shaving one's head was a sign of humiliation (Is 3:17) or mourning (Is 15:2; Jr 41:5-6; 48:37). Ezk 5:12 gives the interpretation of this dramatic message; it emphasizes the severity of judgment and shows how Israel had frustrated its missionary purpose as a witness to the nations.⁶

³ Life Application Notes

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 5:1). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc. Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 5:1). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (1194). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

Verses 1–4

We have here the sign by which the utter destruction of Jerusalem is set forth; and here, as before, the prophet is himself the sign, that the people might see how much he affected himself with, and interested himself in, the case of Jerusalem, and how it lay to his heart, even when he foretold the desolations of it. he was so much concerned about it as to take what was done to it as done to himself, so far was he from desiring the woeful day.

I. He must *shave off the hair of his head and beard* (v. 1), which signified God's utter rejecting and abandoning that people, as a useless worthless generation, such as could well be spared, nay, such as it would be his honour to part with; his judgments, and all the instruments he made use of in cutting them off, were this *sharp knife* and this *razor*, that were proper to be made use of, and would do execution. Jerusalem had been the head, but, having degenerated, had become as the *hair*, which, when it grows thick and long, is but a burden which a man wishes to get clear of, as God of the sinners in Zion. *Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries*, Isa. 1:24. Ezekiel must not cut off that hair only which was superfluous, but *cut it all off*, denoting the full end that God would make of Jerusalem. The hair that would not be trimmed and kept neat and clean by the admonitions of the prophets must be all shaved off by utter destruction. Those will be ruined that will not be reformed.

II. He must *weigh the hair and divide it into three parts*. This intimates the very exact directing of God's judgments according to equity (by him men and their actions are *weighed* in the unerring balance of truth and righteousness) and the proportion which divine justice observes in punishing some by one judgment and others by another; one way or other, they shall all be met with. Some make the shaving of the hair to denote the loss of their liberty and of their honour: it was looked upon as a mark of ignominy, as in the disgrace Hanun put on David's ambassadors. It denotes also the loss of their joy, for they shaved their heads upon occasion of great mourning; I may add the loss of their Nazariteship, for the shaving of the head was a period to that vow (Num. 6:18), and Jerusalem was now no longer looked upon as a *holy city*.

III. He must dispose of the hair so that it might all be destroyed or dispersed, v. 2. 1. One *third part must be burnt in the midst of the city*, denoting the multitudes that should perish by famine and pestilence, and perhaps many in the conflagration of the city, *when the days of the siege were fulfilled*. Or the laying of that glorious city in ashes might well be looked upon as a third part of the destruction threatened. 2. Another third part was to be *cut in pieces with a knife*, representing the many who, during the siege, were slain by the sword, in their sallies out upon the besiegers, and especially when the city was taken by storm, the Chaldeans being then most furious and the Jews most feeble. 3. Another third part was to be *scattered in the wind*, denoting the carrying away of some into the land of the conqueror and the flight of others into the neighbouring countries for shelter; so that they were hurried, some one way and some another, like loose hairs in the wind. But, lest they should think that this dispersion would be their escape, God adds, *I will draw out a sword after them*, so that wherever they go evil shall pursue them. Note, God has variety of judgments wherewith to accomplish the destruction of a sinful people and to make an end when he begins.

IV. He must preserve a small quantity of the third sort that were to be *scattered in the wind*, and *bind them in his skirts*, as one would bind that which he is very mindful and

careful of, v. 3. This signified perhaps that little handful of people which were left under the government of Gedaliah, who, it was hoped, would keep possession of the land when the body of the people was carried into captivity. Thus God would have done well for them if they would have done well for themselves. But these few that were reserved must be taken and *cast into the fire*, v. 4. When Gedaliah and his friends were slain the people that put themselves under his protection were scattered, some gone into Egypt, others carried off by the Chaldeans, and in short the land totally cleared of them; then this was fulfilled, for out of those combustions *a fire came forth into all the house of Israel*, who, as fuel upon the fire, kindled and consumed one another. Note, It is ill with a people when those are taken away in wrath that seemed to be marked for monuments of mercy; for then there is no remnant or escaping, none shut up or left.⁷

McGee: This must have looked something like one of our modern commercials for an electric razor—only they didn't have electric razors in those days! Just what was the meaning of this? Ezekiel was to shave his head and his beard, which was unusual for a priest to do. I imagine the people gathered all around to watch as Ezekiel shaved himself out there in the open.

After he shaved, Ezekiel carefully divided the hair into three parts. One third of the hair he took and burned inside the city. This represented the people who were going to be besieged and burned with fire inside the city at the time of its destruction—this is exactly what happened to them. The second third of the hair he took and smote—he really worked it over. This depicted what was to happen to those people who lived through the siege—they fell by the sword. The last third of the people were scattered out; this group included those who went down to Egypt taking Jeremiah with them. The small remnant of God's people who eventually returned to the city is pictured by the few hairs that were bound up in Ezekiel's skirts.⁸

Shaving the **head** was an act showing shame or disgrace in Hebrew culture (see 7:18; 2 Sam. 10:4). It also represented a type of pagan mourning forbidden by the Law (see 27:31; Deut. 14:1; Isa. 15:2; 22:12). Shaving the head was a mark of defilement, making a priest like Ezekiel ritually unclean, and so unable to perform his duties in the temple (Lev. 21:5). This message was telling the people that they were about to be humiliated and defiled.⁹

ESV: :1–4 razor. Although cleanliness from disease may underlie this action (Lev. 14:9), it is unlikely that that picture of purification is in mind here. Rather, the shaving of head and beard combines elements that are again both desecrating and shaming. Priests should not shave off their hair (Ezek. 44:20; see also Lev. 21:5), so this desecrates as the unclean food did in Ezekiel 4. Further, the shaming of the king of Assyria in Isa. 7:20 at God's own hands echoes Ezekiel's action here. Each of the three actions should be understood as proclaiming destruction, even for those who survive (scatter to the wind,

Henry, M. (1996). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Eze 5:1–4). Peabody: Hendrickson.

McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 5:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ The Nelson Study Bible

Ezek. 5:2; bind them, v. 3). Even the remnant of vv. 3–4 faces a precarious and vulnerable future.

Chuck Smith: They've taken the judgments of God, the law of God, and they've turned it into wickedness. Look at our nation today, how we have taken the laws of God and turned them into wickedness. How that the laws today are supporting wickedness. It's exactly what they had done. God's judgment is coming forth upon them. God's judgment will surely come upon our land just as sure as God's judgment came upon Israel. God's judgment is coming upon our land because of taking the laws and making them support evil, wickedness.¹⁰

Ezekiel 5:2

Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them.

Missler: Many things will point to this idea of fire. One of the allegorical idioms is being tried by fire. We are familiar with the refining of silver and gold, but here in Ezekiel's prophecy it is Israel that is being refined by fire. Fire here is tribulation.

The idea of fire being used as a method of refining is used throughout the Scripture in many contexts. One of the idioms that you will discover, is that the Old Testament prophecies of this very particular period of time (3 ½ years) during which Israel will be tried. This also appears in the Old Testament idiom of trial by fire.

The whole point of the fire is the acknowledgment that the Lord is God.

Three classes are described. The sword was to destroy one third of the people; famine and plague another third ("fire" in Ez 5:2 being explained in Ez 5:12 to mean pestilence and famine); that which remained was to be scattered among the nations. A few only of the last portion were to escape, symbolized by the hairs bound in Ezekiel's skirts (Ez 5:3; Je 40:6; 52:16). Even of these some were to be thrown into the fiery ordeal again (Ez 5:4; Je 41:1, 2, &c. Je 44:14, &c.). The "skirts" being able to contain but few express that extreme limit to which God's goodness can reach.¹¹

The hair that had been set aside earlier was now put to use. Ezekiel carried a third of his hair to the middle of the city and set it on fire. The purpose of this action, explained in verse 12, was to illustrate that a third of the people would die by the plague or by famine. When Nebuchadnezzar's army finally broke through the city's walls, they found a population decimated by famine. The food shortage was so severe that the people had resorted to cannibalism (v. 10). Such horrors had been predicted by Moses (Deut. 28:52-57) and were verified by Jeremiah (Lam. 2:20; 4:10).

¹⁰ Chuck Smith, Notes on Ezekiel, Pastor/Founder, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, CA
Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 5:2). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Those who survived the famine had to face the sword. After burning the first third of his hair, Ezekiel went through the city with the second third and chopped it up with his sword. This action meant that a third of the Jerusalemites would die by the sword (Ezek. 5:12).

The one-third of the inhabitants of Jerusalem who would survive the siege would still be in jeopardy. This was illustrated by the prophet's scattering a third of his hair to the wind. Those who survived Jerusalem's fall to Babylon would be taken away in captivity and would live in fear.¹²

Each citizen of Jerusalem would suffer one of the three fates depicted by each of the three mounds of the equally measured shorn hair: (1) Some would be burned along with the city or would die from plague, famine, or other siege conditions (5:12; 2 Kin. 25:9); (2) some would be murdered by the sword during the attack (5:12; 2 Kin. 25:18–21); and (3) some would be scattered in the wind—referring to the Exile (5:12; 2 Kin. 25:11–17, 21).¹³

Constable: The prophet was to shave the hair of his head and beard with a sword symbolizing the defilement and humiliation that would come on Jerusalem because of her sin. Shaving the head and beard was forbidden for Israelites in their law (Deut. 14:1). It was a pagan practice that expressed great grief and humiliation (cf. 9:3; 27:31; 2 Sam. 10:4-5; Isa. 15:2; 22:12; Jer. 16:6; 41:5-6; 48:37; Amos 8:10). If an Israelite priest shaved his head, he was defiled and no longer holy to the Lord (Lev. 21:5-6). Thus Ezekiel's action pictured the unclean condition of Israel before the Lord as well as its removal in judgment by Babylon's king (cf. Isa. 7:20).

Then Ezekiel was to divide his cut hair using a scale to measure it in three equal piles. Weighing symbolized discriminating evaluation and impending judgment (cf. Prov. 21:2; Jer. 15:2; Dan. 5:27). When the days of the siege were over, after 430 days (4:5-6), he was to burn one-third of the hair in the center of the model of Jerusalem that he had built with the brick (4:1). He should chop up another third of the hair with his sword outside the model city. The remaining third he was to throw up into the air so the wind would blow it away. This represented the fate of the Jews in Jerusalem during the siege. One third would die in the burning and = destruction of the city (cf. 2 Kings 25:9), another third would die at the hand of the Babylonian soldiers outside the city (cf. 2 Kings 25:18-21; 2 Chron. 36:17), and one third would go into captivity (cf. 2 Kings 25:11, 21) driven by soldiers that Yahweh would send after them.¹⁴

Ezekiel 5:3

Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts.

LAN: The few strands of hair Ezekiel put in his garment symbolized the small remnant of faithful people whom God would preserve. But even some from this remnant would be

Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 5:2). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹³ The Nelson Study Bible

¹⁴ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, 2010 edition

judged and destroyed because their faith was not genuine. Where will you stand in the coming judgment? Matthew 7:22-23 warns that many who believe they are safe are not. Make sure your commitment is vital and heartfelt.

3-4. After Ezekiel had burned, chopped, and scattered his hair, **a few strands** remained. God told Ezekiel to **tuck them away in the folds of his garment**. Hiding these few hairs represented God's preserving a remnant in the midst of judgment. The "garment" was the long robe or tunic men wore. It was secured at the waist by a belt or sash. The bottom was pulled up and tucked into the belt to form a pouch for carrying things. This was probably where Ezekiel put those few hairs.

The **few** hairs in Ezekiel's garment did not remain undisturbed, for he was to toss some of them in **the fire**. Some scholars feel that this refers to a purifying judgment that would refine the remnant in captivity (cf. 6:8-10). However, the **fire** (5:4) probably refers (as in v. 2) to the suffering and death awaiting these people. This judgment was for **the whole house of Israel**. Even the remnant in exile would not escape the flames of oppression.¹⁵

Vs. 1-4 Chapter 5 begins with directions for an action parable which was to be performed "when the days of the siege are completed," i.e., after the 430 days. Ezekiel was told to take a razor-sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor to shave his head and beard. He was then to take scales and divide the shaven hair into three equal piles. After the 430 days of his symbolic siege of Jerusalem, he was to take the first pile of hair and burn it "at the center of the city," i.e., in the middle of the brick which had on it the diagram of Jerusalem. The second pile he was to spread around the diagram of the city, and then chop with a sword. The last pile of hair he was to scatter to the wind. God declared that he would "unsheathe a sword" after these, i.e., they will not escape suffering by fleeing from the land (5:1f.).

Ezekiel was to take a few of those hairs which had been scattered to the wind and bind them in the edge of his garment. Here is hope! A remnant would survive. Some of those hairs, however, were again to be burned. The remnant would suffer persecution. The remnant in Babylon would constitute the "whole house of Israel" after the destruction of Jerusalem (5:3f.).¹⁶

Constable: Ezekiel was also to take a few hairs from the last group and hide them in the edge of his robe symbolizing the remnant that the Lord would preserve in captivity. Still other hairs he was to throw into the fire representing the fact that the Lord would judge the whole house of Israel. The fire of judgment that would burn in Jerusalem would spread to judge the whole population of Jews.

Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 5:3-4). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 5:1-4). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Ezekiel 5:4

Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; *for* thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.

[all the house of Israel] Note here, as in many other places, the term "all the house of Israel" is now limited to Judah, which included some of all the tribes. Judah was truly representative of all Israel after the destruction of the ten-tribe kingdom.

Clarke: 1-4: Take thee a sharp knife—Among the Israelites, and indeed among most ancient nations, there were very few edge-tools. The sword was the chief; and this was used as a knife, a razor, etc., according to its different length and sharpness. It is likely that only one kind of instrument is here intended; a knife or short sword, to be employed as a razor.

Here is a new emblem produced, in order to mark out the coming evils.

1. The prophet represents the Jewish nation.
2. His hair, the people.
3. The razor, the Chaldeans.
4. The cutting the beard and hair, the calamities, sorrows, and disgrace coming upon the people. Cutting off the hair was a sign of mourning; see on Jeremiah 45:5 (note); Jeremiah 48:37 (note); and also a sign of great disgrace; see 2 Samuel 10:4.
5. He is ordered to divide the hair, verse 2, into three equal parts, to intimate the different degrees and kinds of punishment which should fall upon the people.
6. The balances, verse 1, were to represent the Divine justice, and the exactness with which God's judgments should be distributed among the offenders.
7. This hair, divided into three parts, is to be disposed of thus:
 1. A third part is to be burnt in the midst of the city, to show that so many should perish by famine and pestilence during the siege.
 2. Another third part he was to cut in small portions about the city, (that figure which he had portrayed upon the brick), to signify those who should perish in different sorties, and in defending the walls.
 3. And the remaining third part he was to scatter in the wind, to point out those who should be driven into captivity. And,
 4. The sword following them was intended to show that their lives should be at the will of their captors, and that many of them should perish by the sword in their dispersions.
 5. The few hairs which he was to take in his skirts, verse 3, was intended to represent those few Jews that should be left in the land under Gedaliah, after the taking of the city.
 6. The throwing a part of these last into the fire, verse 4, was intended to show the miseries that these suffered in Judea, in Egypt, and finally in their being also carried away into Babylon on the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. See these transactions particularly pointed out in the notes on Jeremiah, chapters 40,

41, 42. Some think that this prophecy may refer to the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes.¹⁷

Ezekiel 5:5

Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries *that are* round about her.

Missler: Ezekiel is always talking of Jerusalem. Remember that Ezekiel is a prophet to slaves in Babylon, hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem. At the time he was warning them, Jerusalem was still around, yet it was about to be destroyed. See Deut 32:8. All nations have been assigned an inheritance by God.

See also Isa 2:1-4. God had an origin for Jerusalem; and He has a destiny for Jerusalem. It is fascinating that a city which has no natural harbor, no natural resources could make an impact.

Heavy judgment is predicted for Jerusalem (see Lev 26; Deut 28; Jer 19; or Lam 2). Jerusalem plays a pivotal role in God's plan. When Jerusalem fails, He punishes it; and yet when the world is blessed, the blessings come from Jerusalem.

Isa 2:4. This was then, not now. Micah 4:1-4, speaks of the last days and Jerusalem.

Clarke: This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations—I have made this city the most eminent and the most illustrious in the world. Some think that these words refer to its geographical situation, as being equally in the center of the habitable world. But any point on a globe is its center, no matter where laid down; and it would not be difficult to show that even this literal sense is tolerably correct. But the point which is the center of the greatest portion of land that can be exhibited on one hemisphere is the capital of the British empire.

in ... midst—Jerusalem is regarded in God's point of view as center of the whole earth, designed *to radiate the true light over the nations in all directions*. Compare *Margin* ("navel"), Ez 38:12; Ps 48:2; Je 3:17. No center in the ancient heathen world could have been selected more fitted than Canaan to be a vantage ground, whence the people of God might have acted with success upon the heathenism of the world. It lay midway between the oldest and most civilized states, Egypt and Ethiopia on one side, and Babylon, Nineveh, and India on the other, and afterwards Persia, Greece, and Rome. The Phoenician mariners were close by, through whom they might have transmitted the true religion to the remotest lands; and all around the Ishmaelites, the great *inland* traders in South Asia and North Africa. Israel was thus placed, not for its own selfish good, but to be the spiritual benefactor of the whole world. Compare Ps 67:1-7 throughout. Failing in this, and falling into idolatry, its guilt was far worse than that of the heathen; not that Israel *literally* went beyond the heathen in abominable idolatries. But "*corruptio optimi pessima*"; the perversion of that which in itself is the best is worse than the perversion of that which is less perfect: is in fact the worst of all kinds of perversion. Therefore their

¹⁷ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

punishment was the severest. So the position of the Christian professing Church now, if it be not a light to the heathen world, its condemnation will be sorer than theirs (Mt 5:13; 11:21–24; Heb 10:28, 29).¹⁸

5-7. God was not capriciously inflicting this punishment on Jerusalem. It came because of her rebellion. God set Jerusalem in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. Yet in spite of this exalted position (possibly also referring to her central position geographically in the Middle East), Israel rebelled (cf. 2:3) against God’s laws and decrees more than the surrounding nations. Jerusalem was the recipient of His word, the dwelling place of His glory, and the object of His love. The splendor of His favor only magnified the blackness of her deeds. Instead of honoring her God she rebelled against Him. Amazingly Israel’s conduct was lower than the standards of Gentile nations.¹⁹

Vs. 5-12 The prophet uses a “because . . . therefore” pattern to underscore three reasons for the terrible siege. Included here is verbal explanation and amplification of the symbolic acts just performed.

1. *Rejection of divine guidance (5:5–8).* So there could be no misunderstanding, the city to which Ezekiel had been symbolically laying siege for 430 days was again identified as Jerusalem (cf. 4:1). Geographically she was “in the midst of nations.” Throughout history Palestine had been a crossroads between Africa and Asia. God intended for this people to be a shining example to the “lands around her.” To them God had imparted his “ordinances” and his “statutes.” Yet in spite of her position and privilege Jerusalem had “rebelled.” In God’s sight she was more evil than her heathen neighbors. She had rejected God’s ordinances and had refused to abide by his statutes (5:5f.).

Refusing divine standards resulted in moral and spiritual “turmoil.” In some respects Jerusalem fell below the standards of her neighbors. Heathen peoples were far more loyal to their gods than Israel was to the Living God. For this reason God made a declaration of hostility against Jerusalem: “Behold, I, even I am against you.” The Lord was about to enter into mortal combat with this city. Since God had been publicly profaned by the citizens of Jerusalem, there he would be publicly vindicated in the “judgments” which he brought upon the place (5:7–8).

2. *Abominations (5:9–10).* A second reason for the threat against Jerusalem is captured in the word “abominations.” Idols and idolatrous paraphernalia and worship were considered abomination by the Lord. Jerusalem’s involvement with the gods of the nations justified the unprecedented judgment which God was about to unleash against the place. Though Jerusalem would fall many times after 586 B.C., never again would God bring upon that place a judgment which would, in all of its components, be the equivalent (5:9).

Two particularly gruesome aspects of the siege of 587–86 B.C. are predicted. The first is cannibalism: “fathers will eat their sons among you, and sons will eat their fathers.”

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 5:5–6). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc. Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 5:5–7). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The second is total depopulation. God said that he would scatter all their remnant to every wind (5:10).

3. *Defilement of the sanctuary (5:11–12)*. The people of God had “defiled” the sanctuary, i.e., the Temple, with “detestable idols” and “abominations.” By so doing they were in effect repudiating any special relationship to Yahweh. The Lord, therefore, would “withdraw” from them. The presence of his Temple in Jerusalem would not guarantee their safety. He would no longer show them any pity nor spare them from the atrocities of war. A third of the population would die by plague or famine during the siege. Another third would fall by the sword in the battle to defend the city. Another third would be scattered to every wind. Some of these would flee of their own volition; others would be led away in chain gangs. Yet even on foreign soil they would not escape the relentless sword of divine justice.²⁰

Election, Condemnation—The idolatry of Jerusalem placed her against God. God would therefore punish her. God has a standard to which He expects His people to conform. The elect’s actions should distinguish them from the nations. When they do not, they face discipline.

Verses 5–17

We have here the explanation of the foregoing similitude: *This is Jerusalem*. Thus it is usual in scripture language to give the name of the thing signified to the sign; as when Christ said, *This is my body*. The prophet’s head, which was to be shaved, signified Jerusalem, which by the judgments of God was now to be stripped of all its ornaments, to be emptied of all its inhabitants, and to be set *naked and bare*, to be *shaved with a razor that is hired*, Isa. 7:20. The head of one that was a priest, a prophet, a holy person, was fittest to represent Jerusalem the holy city. Now the contents of these verses are much the same with what we have often met with, and still shall, in the writings of the prophets. Here we have,

I. The privileges Jerusalem was honoured with (v. 5): *I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her*, and those famous nations and very considerable. Jerusalem was not situated in a remote obscure corner of the world, far from neighbours, but in the midst of kingdoms that were populous, polite, and civilized, famed for learning, arts, and sciences, and which then made the greatest figure in the world. But there seems to be more in it than this. 1. Jerusalem was dignified and preferred above the neighbouring nations and their cities. it was *set in the midst* of them as excelling them all. This *holy mountain was exalted above all the hills*, Isa. 2:2. *Why leap you, you high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in*, Ps. 68:16. Jerusalem was a city upon a hill, conspicuous and illustrious, and which all the neighbouring nations had an eye upon, some for good-will, some for ill-will. 2. Jerusalem was designed to have a good influence upon *the nations and countries round about*, was set in the midst of them as a candle upon a candlestick, to spread the light of divine revelation, which she was blessed with, to all the dark corners of the neighbouring nations, that from them it might diffuse itself further, even to the ends of the earth.

Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 5:5–12). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Jerusalem was set *in the midst* of the nations, to be as the heart in the body, to invigorate this dead world with a divine life as well as to enlighten this dark world with a divine light, to be an example of every thing that was good. The nations that observed what excellent *statutes and judgments* they had concluded them to be *a wise and understanding people* (Deu. 4:6), fit to be consulted as an oracle, as they were in Solomon's time, 1 Ki. 4:34. And, had they preserved this reputation and made a right use of it, what a blessing would Jerusalem have been to all the nations about! But, failing to be so, the accomplishment of this intention was reserved for its latter days, *when out of Zion went forth the gospel law and the word of the Lord Jesus from Jerusalem*, and there *repentance and remission* began to be preached, and thence the preachers of them *went forth into all nations*. And, when that was done, Jerusalem was levelled with the ground. Note, When places and persons are made great, it is with design that they may do good and that those about them may be the better for them, that their *light may shine before men*.

II. The provocations Jerusalem was guilty of. A very high charge is here drawn up against that city, and proved beyond contradiction sufficient to justify God in seizing its privileges and putting it under military execution. 1. She has *not walked in God's statutes*, nor *kept his judgments* (v. 7); nay, the inhabitants of Jerusalem had *refused his judgments and his statutes* (v. 6); they did not do their duty, nay, they *would not*, they said that they would not. Those *statutes and judgments* which their neighbours admired they despised, which they should have set before their face they cast behind their back. Note, A contempt of the word and law of God opens a door to all manner of iniquity. God's statutes are the terms on which he deals with men; those that refuse his terms cannot expect his favours. 2. She had *changed God's judgments into wickedness* (v. 6), a very high expression of profaneness, that the people had not only broken God's laws, but had so perverted and abused them that they had made them the excuse and colour of their wickedness. They introduced the abominable customs and usages of the heathen, instead of God's institutions; this was changing *the truth of God into a lie* (Rom. 1:25) and the *glory of God into shame*, Ps. 4:2. Note, Those that have been well educated, if they live ill, put the highest affront imaginable upon God, as if he were the patron of sin and *his judgments were turned into wickedness*. 3. She had been worse than the neighbouring nations, to whom she should have set a good example: *She has changed my judgments*, by idolatries and false worship, *more than the nations* (v. 6), and she has *multiplied* (that is, multiplied idols and altars, gods and temples, multiplied those things the unity of which was their praise) *more than the nations that were round about*. Israel's God is one, and his name one, his altar one; but they, not content with this one God, multiplied their gods to such a degree that *according to the number of their cities so were their gods*, and their altars were *as heaps in the furrows of the field*; so that they exceeded all their neighbours in having *gods many and lords many*. They corrupted revealed religion more than the Gentiles had corrupted natural religion. Note, If those who have made a profession of religion, and have had a pious education, apostatize from it, they are commonly more profane and vicious than those who never made any profession; they have *seven other spirits more wicked*. 4. She had *not done according to the judgments of the nations*, v. 7. Israel had not acted towards their God, as the nations had acted towards their gods, though they were false gods; they had not been so observant of him nor so constant to him. Has a nation *changed its gods*, or slighted them, so as they have? Jer.

2:11. or it may refer to their morals; instead of reforming their neighbors, they came short of them; and many who were of the *uncircumcision kept the righteousness of the law* better than those who were of the *circumcision*, Rom. 2:26, 27. Those who had the light of scripture did not *according to the judgments* of many who had only the light of nature. Note, There are those who are called *Christians* who will in the great day be condemned by the better tempers and better lives of sober heathens. 5. The particular crime charged upon Jerusalem is profaning the holy things, which she had been both entrusted and honoured with (v. 11): *Thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things*, with thy idols and idolatries. The images of their pretended deities, and the groves erected in honour of them, were brought into the temple; and the ceremonies used by idolaters were brought into the worship of God. Thus every thing that is sacred was polluted. Note, Idols are detestable things any where, but more especially so in the sanctuary.

III. The punishments that Jerusalem should fall under for these provocations: *Shall not God visit for these things?* No doubt he shall. The matter of the sentence here passed upon Jerusalem is very dreadful, and the manner of expression makes it yet more so; the judgments are various, and the threatenings of them varied, reiterated, inculcated, that one may well say, *Who is able to stand in God's sight when once he is angry?*

1. God will take this work of punishing Jerusalem into his own hands; and *who knows the power of his anger* and what *a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands?* Observe what a strong emphasis is laid upon it (v. 8): *I, even I, am against thee*. God had been for Jerusalem, to defend and save it; but miserable is its case when he has turned to be its enemy and fights against it. If God be against us, the whole creation is at war with us, and nothing can be for us so as to stand us in any stead: "You think it is only the Chaldean army that is against you, but they are God's hand, or rather the staff in his hand; it is *I, even I*, that *am against thee*, not only to speak against thee by prophets, but to act against thee by providence. *I will execute judgments in thee* (v. 10), *in the midst of thee* (v. 8), not only in the suburbs, but in the heart of the city, not only in the borders, but in the bowels of the country.' ' Note, Those who will not observe the judgments of God's mouth shall not escape the judgments of his hand; and God's judgments, when they come with commission, will penetrate into the midst of a people, will enter into the soul, *into the bowels like water and like oil into the bones. I will execute judgments*. Note, God himself undertakes to execute his own judgments, according to the true and full intent of them; whatever are the instruments, he is the principal agent.

2. These punishments shall come from his displeasure. As to the body of the people, it shall not be a correction in love, but he will *execute judgments in anger, and in fury, and in furious rebukes* (v. 15), strange expressions to come from a God who has said, *Fury is not in me*, and who has declared himself *gracious, and merciful, and slow to anger*. But they are designed to show the malignity of sin, and the offence it gives to the just and holy God. That must needs be a very evil thing which provokes him to such resentments, and against his own people too, that had been so high in his favour, and expressed with so much satisfaction (v. 13): "*My anger, which has long been withheld, shall now be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them*; it shall not only light upon them, but lie upon them, and fill them as vessels of wrath fitted by their own wickedness to destruction; *and, justice being hereby glorified, I will be comforted*, I will be entirely satisfied in what I have done.' ' As, when God is dishonoured by the sins of men, he is said to be *grieved* (Ps. 95:10), so when he is honoured by their destruction he is said to *be*

comforted. The struggle between mercy and judgment is over, and in this case judgment triumphs, triumphs indeed; for mercy that has been so long abused is now silent and gives up the cause, has not a word more to say on the behalf of such an ungrateful incorrigible people: *My eye shall not spare, neither will I have any pity*, v. 11. Divine compassion defers the punishment, or mitigates it, or supports under it, or shortens it; but here is *judgment without mercy*, wrath without any mixture or alloy of pity. These expressions are thus sharpened and heightened perhaps with design to look further, to the vengeance of eternal fire, which some of the destructions we read of in the Old Testament were typical of, and particularly that of Jerusalem; for surely it is nowhere on this side hell that this word has its full accomplishment, *My eye shall not spare*, but *I will cause my fury to rest*. Note, Those who live and die impenitent will perish for ever unpitied; there is a day coming when *the Lord will not spare*.

3. Punishments shall be public and open: *I will execute these judgments in the sight of the nations* (v. 8); the judgments themselves shall be so remarkable that all the nations far and near shall take notice of them; they shall be all the talk of that part of the world, and the more for the conspicuousness of the place and people on which they are inflicted. Note, Public sins, as they call for public reproofs (*those that sin rebuke before all*), so, if those prevail not, they call for public judgments. *He strikes them as wicked men in the open sight of others* (Job 34:26), that he may maintain and vindicate the honour of his government, for (as Grotius descants upon it here) *why should he suffer it to be said, See what wicked lives those lead who profess to be the worshippers of the only true God!* And, as the publicity of the judgments will redound to the honour of God, so it will serve, (1.) To aggravate the punishment, and to make it lie the more heavily. Jerusalem, being made *waste*, becomes *a reproach among the nations in the sight of all that pass by*, v. 14. The more conspicuous and the more peculiar any have been in the day of their prosperity the greater disgrace attends their fall; and that was Jerusalem's case. The more Jerusalem had been *a praise in the earth* the more it is now *a reproach and a taunt*, v. 15. This she was warned of as much as any thing when her glory commenced (1 Ki. 9:8), and this was lamented as much as any thing when it was laid in the dust, Lam. 2:15. (2.) To teach the nations to fear before the God of Israel, when they see what a jealous God he is, and how severely he punishes sin even in those that are nearest to him: *It shall be an instruction to the nations*, v. 15. Jerusalem should have taught her neighbours the fear of God by her piety and virtue, but, she not doing that, God will teach it to them by her ruin; for they have reason to say, *If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If judgment begin at the house of God, where will it end? If those be thus punished who only had some idolaters among them, what will become of us who are all idolaters?* Note, The destruction of some is designed for the instruction of others. Malefactors are publicly punished *in terrorem*—*that others may take warning*.

4. These punishments, in the kind of them, shall be very severe and grievous. (1.) They shall be such as have no precedent or parallel. Their sins being more provoking than those of others, the judgments executed upon them should be uncommon (v. 9): *"I will do in thee that which I have not done in thee before, though thou hast long since deserved it; nay, that which I have not done in any other city."* This punishment of Jerusalem is said to be *greater than that of Sodom* (Lam. 4:6), which was more grievous than all that went before it; nay, it is such as *"I will not do any more the like*, all the circumstances taken in, to any other city, till the like come to be done again to this city, in the final overthrow by

the Romans.’ ’ This is a rhetorical expression of the most grievous judgments, like that character of Hezekiah, that there was *none like him, before or after him*. (2.) They shall be such as will force them to break the strongest bonds of natural affection to one another, which will be a just punishment of them for their wilfully breaking the bonds of their duty to God (v. 10): *The fathers shall eat the sons, and the sons shall eat the fathers*, through the extremity of the famine, or shall be compelled to do it by their barbarous conquerors. (3.) There shall be a complication of judgments, any one of them terrible enough, and desolating; but what then would they be when they came all together and in perfection? Some shall be taken away by the plague (v. 12); the *pestilence shall pass through thee* (v. 17), sweeping all before it, as the destroying angel; others *shall be consumed with famine*, shall gradually waste away as men in a consumption (v. 12); this is again insisted on (v. 16): *I will send upon them the evil arrows of famine*; hunger shall make them pine, and shall pierce them to the heart, as if arrows, *evil arrows*, poisoned darts, were shot into them. God has many arrows, *evil arrows*, in his quiver; when some are discharged, he has still more in reserve. *I will increase the famine upon you*. A famine in a bereaved country may *decrease* as fruits spring forth; but a famine in a besieged city will *increase* of course; yet god speaks of it as his act: “*I will increase it, and will break your staff of bread*, will take away the necessary supports of life, will disappoint you of all that which you depend upon, so that there is no remedy, but you must fall to the ground.’ ’ Life is frail, is weak, is burdened, so that, if it have not daily bread for its staff to lean upon, it cannot but sink, and is soon gone if that staff be broken. Others *shall fall by the sword round about Jerusalem*, when they sally out upon the besiegers; it is a *sword* which God *will bring*, v. 17. The sword of the Lord, that used to be drawn for Jerusalem’s defence, is now drawn for its destruction. Others are devoured by *evil beasts*, which will make a prey of those that fly for shelter to the deserts and mountains. They shall meet their ruin where they expected refuge, for there is no escaping the judgments of God, v. 17. And, *lastly*, those who escape shall be *scattered into* all parts of the world, *into all the winds* (so it is expressed, v. 10, 12), intimating that they should not only be dispersed, but hurried, and tossed, and driven to and fro, as *chaff before the wind*. Nay, and Cain’s curse (to be fugitives and vagabonds) is not the worst of it neither; their restless life shall be cut off by a bloody death: “*I will draw out a sword after them*, which shall follow them wherever they go.’ ’ *Evil pursues sinners*; and the curse shall come upon them and overtake them.

5. These punishments will prove their ruin by degrees. They shall be *diminished* (v. 11); their strength and glory shall grow less and less. They shall be *bereaved* (v. 17), emptied of all that which was their joy and confidence. God sends these judgments on purpose to destroy them, v. 16. The arrows are not sent (as those which Jonathan shot) for their direction, but *for their destruction*; for god will *accomplish his fury upon them* (v. 13); the day of God’s patience is over, and the ruin is remediless. Though this prophecy was to have its accomplishment now quickly, in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, yet the executioners not being named here, but the criminal only (*this is Jerusalem*), we may well suppose that it looks further, to the final destruction of that great city by the Romans when God made a full end of the Jewish nation, and *caused his fury to rest upon them*.

6. All this is ratified by the divine authority and veracity: *I the Lord have spoken it*, v. 15 and again v. 17. The sentence is passed by him that is Judge of heaven and earth,

whose *judgment is according to truth*, and the judgments of whose hand are according to the judgments of his mouth. he has spoken it who can do it, for with him nothing is impossible. He has spoken it who will do it, for *he is not a man that he should lie*. He has spoken it whom we are bound to hear and heed, whose *ipse dixit*—word commands the most serious attention and submissive assent: *And they shall know that I the Lord have spoken it*, v. 13. There were those who thought it was only the prophet that spoke it in his delirium; but God will make them know, by the accomplishment of it, that he has spoken it in his zeal. Note, Sooner or later, God’s word will prove itself.²¹

ESV: 5–17 God against Jerusalem Explained. Naturally, these symbolic actions carry enigmatic elements, not the least of which is the motivation behind them. This oracular commentary on Ezekiel's street theater offers the rationale and alludes to each of the three phases of Jerusalem's destruction previously acted out. Since this passage is intended to be commentary, it is also in large part self-explanatory.

Ezekiel 5:6

And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that *are* round about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them.

Four sins of Jerusalem (Dake):

1. The people have changed My judgments into wickedness more than other nations.
2. They have changed My statutes more than the countries round about.
3. They have refused My judgments and statutes.
4. They have not walked in them.

Clarke: She hath changed my judgments—God shows the reason why he deals with Jerusalem in greater severity than with the surrounding nations; because she was more wicked than they. Bad and idolatrous as they were, they had a greater degree of morality among them than the Jews had. Having fallen from the true God, they became more abominable than others in proportion to the height, eminence, and glory from which they had fallen. This is the common case of backsliders; they frequently, in their fall, become tenfold more the children of wrath than they were before.

changed ... into—rather, “hath *resisted* My judgments wickedly”; “hath *rebelled* against My ordinances for wickedness” [BUXTORF]. But see on Ez 5:7, end.²²

This is Jerusalem: The words were being said in anguish. The personal God of the Hebrews had given them the city as an inheritance. God loved it and established it as the center of the world, because His temple was there. Here, however, He describes the extent of its people’s abominations. **She has rebelled** refers to the people of the favored

Henry, M. (1996). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Eze 5:5–17). Peabody: Hendrickson.

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 5:6). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

city who had not only stubbornly refused to keep the Law, but whose sin was even worse than that of the nations around them—they had failed to follow even the moral laws that were common among the pagans.²³

Constable: The Lord explained that the center of the drama was Jerusalem that He had set at the center of many nations and lands. Some in Ezekiel's audience undoubtedly hoped that the city under symbolic destruction was Babylon, but it was indeed Jerusalem. It was at the center of civilization geographically and theologically. Some rabbinic writers, early church fathers, and medieval cartographers concluded from this passage that Jerusalem was the "navel of the earth" (cf. 38:12).²⁴

"God intended for Israel to be the great monotheistic missionary to the nations of the ancient world . . ."

But this blessed city had rebelled against Yahweh by being unfaithful to the Mosaic Covenant.

"Although others could freely interchange the name of Zion with Jerusalem, this is impossible for Ezekiel, who avoids the theologically charged designation altogether. As chs. 8—11 demonstrate, for this prophet Jerusalem has ceased to be the residence of God; Zion was no more. The city's privileged status among the nations had been forfeited."²⁵

Ezekiel 5:7

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye multiplied more than the nations that *are* round about you, *and* have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that *are* round about you;

The people's wickedness was so great that they couldn't even keep the laws of the pagan nations around them, not to mention God's laws.

multiplied—rather, "have been more abundantly outrageous"; literally, "to tumultuate"; to have an extravagant rage for idols.²⁶

neither have done according to the judgments of the nations—have not been as tenacious of the true religion as the nations have been of the false. The heathen "changed" not their gods, but the Jews changed Jehovah for idols (see Ez 5:6, "changed My judgments into wickedness," that is, idolatry, Je 2:11). The *Chaldean version* and the *Masora* support the negative. Others omit it (as it is omitted in Ez 11:12), and translate, "*but* have done according to the judgments," &c. However, both Ez 11:12 and also this verse are true. They in one sense "did according to the heathen," namely, in all that was

²³ The Nelson Study Bible

²⁴ Taylor p 86, n 1

²⁵ Block, *The Book*, p 198

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 5:7). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

bad; in another, namely, in that which was good, zeal for religion, they did *not*. Ez 5:9 also proves the negative to be genuine; because in changing their religion, they have *not* done as the nations which have not changed theirs, “*I (also) will do in thee that which I have not done.*”²⁷

The Lord promised to judge Jerusalem in the sight of the other nations because she had been so unfaithful and rebellious. She had not even observed the common laws that her neighbors obeyed.

Ezekiel 5:8

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, *am* against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations.

8-12. God’s anger was directed at Jerusalem, the nation’s capital, because of her sin. She would suffer judgment in the sight of the nations. The object of God’s special favor would soon become the object of His special judgment.²⁸

God, Wrath—God’s wrath is His inevitable expression against persistent sin. When God’s love does not win a response of faith and obedience, God’s wrath is the inevitable result. Wrath is the withdrawal of His pity. The total destruction of His chosen land was a unique, never to be repeated expression of His wrath (v. 9).²⁹

ESV: 8–10 The hostility identified here with God's setting himself against Jerusalem points back to the actions in 4:1–2. eat their sons. This gruesome prospect arises not only out of the realities of siege warfare (see Lam. 4:10) but also from the judgments for breaking the covenant (Deut. 28:49–57).

Ezekiel 5:9

And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations.

Clarke: I will do in thee that which I have not done—The destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar was one of the greatest calamities that ever fell on any nation or place before; and that by the Romans under Titus exceeded all that has taken place since. These two sackages of that city have no parallel in the history of mankind.

9-17: The elements in God’s judgment on the people for their sins can be enumerated in this way: (1) a judgment that will be worse in extent than ever before; (2) a terrible famine that will lead to cannibalism; (3) **pestilence**, meaning plagues and diseases

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 5:7). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc. Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 5:8–12). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

²⁹ Disciple’s Study Bible

associated with famine; (4) violent death by sword or wild beasts; and (5) the scattering and killing of a remnant. These punishments would come as the result of the people's idolatry—they had **defiled** God's temple with **detestable things** and **abominations** (v. 11), evidencing their complete disregard for the Law (see vv. 6, 7; see 11:18). The Ten Commandments were the foundation of all Mosaic legislation, and they prohibited idolatry (see Ex. 20:3). Further, these judgments would be accomplished: (1) without pity and with no hope of escape (v. 11), (2) with a full expenditure of God's wrath (v. 13), and (3) with the result of making God's people an object lesson of warning among the on-looking neighbor nations (v. 15). In His covenant with His people, God had promised to send these curses if the people chose to rebel against Him (Deut. 28:15–68). The disobedient and rebellious people should not be surprised at the horror they were soon to face.

Constable: The Lord would punish Jerusalem uniquely for her sins. Father's would eat their own sons, and sons their fathers, in the siege (cf. Lev. 26:29; Deut. 28:53; 2 Kings 6:28-29; Jer. 19:9; Lam. 4:10). Yahweh would scatter most of the surviving remnant from the Promised Land.

Ezekiel 5:10

Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds.

Missler: The concept of the remnant became the dominant note of prophecy in the Old Testament, from the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. on; but you can also find the idea in Genesis. Remember the flood, out of the entire world, God saved 8 people. As we go through both historically and prophetically, we are going to constantly run into this notion of a remnant.

Isa 6:12-13; note that "substance thereof" is really "stump" referring to the root of Jesse, a prophecy. Cf. Isa 10:20-22.

Clarke: The fathers shall eat the sons—Though we have not this fact so particularly stated in history, yet we cannot doubt of it, considering the extremities to which they were reduced during the siege. The same is referred to by Jeremiah, Lamentations 4:10. Even the women, who were remarkable for kindness and humanity, boiled their own children, and ate them during the siege.

This was unthinkable for any Israelite to practice cannibalism; that this should occur would be the enactment of the curses that sanctioned the Lord's covenant (Lv 26:29; Dt 28:53–55; see Jr 19:8–9). Priests and Nazirites were not even allowed to touch a corpse (Lv 21:1–2; Nm 6:7). Ezekiel's prophecy underscores the severity of the crisis conditions

predicted for the fall of Jerusalem. These same conditions were encountered at the siege of Samaria (2 Kg 6:24–33, especially v. 29).³⁰

Ezekiel 5:11

Wherefore, *as I live*, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish *thee*; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity.

LAN: It was a serious sin to defile the temple, God’s sanctuary, by worshiping idols and practicing evil within its very walls. In the New Testament, we learn that God now makes his home *within* those who are his. Our bodies are God’s temple (see 1 Cor. 6:19). We defile God’s temple today by allowing gossiping, bitterness, love of money, lying, or any other wrong actions or attitudes to be a part of our lives. By asking the Holy Spirit’s help, we can keep from defiling his temple, our bodies.

diminish—literally “withdraw,” namely, Mine “eye” (which presently follows), that is, My favors; Job 36:7 uses the *Hebrew* verb in the same way. As the Jews had *withdrawn* from God’s sanctuary its sacredness by “defiling” it, so God *withdraws* His countenance from them. The significance of the expression lies in the allusion to De 4:2, “Ye shall not *diminish* aught from the word which I command you”; they had done so, therefore God *diminishes* them. The reading found in six manuscripts, “I will cut thee off,” is not so good.³¹

ESV: Deuteronomy often steels the Israelites to inflict stern judgment—when issues of purity or loyalty are at stake—in terms of their “eye not pitying” (e.g., Deut. 13:8; 19:13). The same Hebrew is used here for God’s *eye* that will not spare (also six more times in Ezekiel).

The Lord affirmed that He would withdraw His presence from His people because they had defiled His temple with idols (cf. ch. 8; 10:4; 11:22-23). The clause “as I live” expresses a very solemn oath. It appears 14 times in Ezekiel, more often than in any other prophetic book. God would not have pity on them. One third of the residents would die by plague or famine, another third by the sword, and another third would scatter from the land driven by enemy soldiers.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (1194). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 5:11). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Ezekiel 5:12

A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.

draw out ... sword after them—(Le 26:33). Skeptics object; no such thing happened under Zedekiah, as is here foretold; namely, that a third part of the nation should die by pestilence, a third part by the sword, and a third be scattered unto all winds, and a sword sent after them. But the prophecy is not restricted to Zedekiah's time. It includes all that Israel suffered, or was still to suffer, for their sins, especially those committed at that period (Ez 17:21). It only received its primary fulfilment under Zedekiah: numbers then died by the pestilence and by the sword; and numbers were scattered in all quarters and not carried to Babylonia alone, as the objectors assert (compare Ezr 1:4; Es 3:8; Ob 1:14).³²

Ezekiel's three-part judgment formula ("famine," "plague," and "sword") appears here for the first time, and recurs in 6:11, 12; 7:15; 12:16; 14:21. Jeremiah frequently used the same formula (Jr 14:12; 21:7, 9; 24:10; 27:8, 13; 29:17–18; 32:24, 36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17, 22; 44:13). Both prophets used the formula to indicate that judgment would be severe and extensive; the conditions were based on the curses of the Mosaic covenant (Lv 26:29; Dt 28:53–55).³³

ESV: The groupings of thirds point back to the symbolic action of the hair in vv. 1–4, as does the reference to scattering (cf. v. 10). With pestilence, famine, and sword (also v. 17; 6:11–12; 7:15; 12:16; and 14:21), Ezekiel employs one of Jeremiah's favorite groupings of three disasters (used 17 times), one of several examples of the younger prophet's use of language borrowed from his older contemporary.

Before Babylon conquers the city, a third part of the people will have already died because of the disease and the famine that exists within Jerusalem.

Chuck Smith: When the Babylonian army comes in, another third part of them will be wiped out with the sword, and then the remaining third part will be scattered around, but God will bring the sword after them. And they will be destroyed. But there will be a small remnant that God will preserve and out of that small remnant, God will start over and He will ultimately bring them back into the land.

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 5:12). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc. Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (1195). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

Ezekiel 5:13

Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken *it* in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them.

Clarke: I will cause my fury to rest—My displeasure, and the evidences of it, shall not be transient; they shall be permanent upon you, and among you. And is not this dreadfully true to the present day?

LAN: Have you ever seen someone try to discipline a child by saying, “If you do that one more time. . .”? If the parent doesn’t follow through, the child learns not to listen. Empty threats backfire. God was going to punish the Israelites for their blatant sins, and he wanted them to know that he would do what he said. The people learned the hard way that God always follows through on his word. Too many people ignore God’s warnings, treating them as empty threats. But what God threatens, he does. Don’t make the mistake of thinking God doesn’t really mean what he says.

Vs. 13-17 The siege and consequent fall of Jerusalem would have impact in three areas. These areas are marked off in the text by the expression “I the Lord have spoken” (vv. 13, 15, 17). Vindication of the prophetic word spoken in God’s name is a major theme in this book.

First, the judgment against Jerusalem would have an impact on God himself. God gave triple emphasis to the fact that the judgment against Jerusalem would bring an end to his wrath against them. “My anger will be spent, and I will satisfy my wrath on them, and I shall be appeased.” These words contain an oblique note of hope. God’s people would realize that God had spoken in his “zeal” prior to the event. Through men like Jeremiah and Ezekiel God had warned his people repeatedly that he would destroy their Temple and capital. The Lord is zealous *for* truth, and *against* evil. The judgment against Jerusalem, then, would result in an enhanced appreciation for the true nature of God (5:13).

Second, the judgment against Jerusalem would have an impact on the nations. Jerusalem would become a “desolation” and consequently “a reproach among the nations” which surrounded her. All who passed by the ruins would show nothing but contempt for Jerusalem. How could a people be so wicked as to provoke their God to execute judgments against them “in anger, wrath and raging rebukes!” At the same time, the Gentiles would look upon the ruins of Jerusalem as “a warning and an object of horror.” What happened at Jerusalem could happen to them. There the nations would learn that Yahweh is in control of history (5:14f.).

The overthrow of Jerusalem would have an impact on the populace. The “deadly arrows of famine,” i.e., all calamities which lead to food shortages, would be hurled against Jerusalem with the intent of destroying the place. The famine would gradually intensify until finally “the staff of bread” was broken. Because of depopulation resulting from the war for survival, “wild beasts” would become a menace to their children. Plague and violent death would pass through the midst of the city doing their deadly work.

Finally they would face the “sword,” i.e., the Chaldeans, God’s agent who would execute the final blow against the city (5:16f.).³⁴

13-17. In three short vignettes Ezekiel indicated that God’s judgment would last till the fury of His anger was spent. Ezekiel stressed the divine source of each judgment as God announced, I the LORD have spoken (vv. 13, 15, 17). In the first statement (v. 13) Ezekiel indicated that God’s judgment would cease and subside only after He had poured out His wrath on them.

The second statement (vv. 14-15) stressed the humiliation Jerusalem would feel because of God’s judgment. Other nations would reproach and mock her (cf. Lam. 2:15). Yet those ridiculing nations would be horrified at what was happening to Jerusalem. In fact such carnage in the city would serve as a warning to them.

The third statement (Ezek. 5:16-17) pictured God as an attacking archer shooting His destructive arrows (cf. Deut. 32:23) against Jerusalem. God’s “arrows” of judgment included famine . . . wild beasts . . . plague, and the sword—calamities uniquely associated with divine judgment on God’s disobedient nation (cf. Deut. 32:23-25; Ezek. 14:21).³⁵

Constable: Ezekiel, more often than in any other prophetic book. God would not have pity on them. One third of the residents would die by plague or famine, another third by the sword, and another third would scatter from the land driven by enemy soldiers.

Ezekiel 5:14

Moreover I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that *are* round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by.

Constable: The Lord would desolate the people and make them an abhorrence to the observing nations. They would revile the Jews and use them as a warning of the consequences of covenant unfaithfulness, Yahweh promised.

Ezekiel 5:15

So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that *are* round about thee, when I shall execute judgments in thee in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I the LORD have spoken *it*.

instruction—literally, “a corrective chastisement,” that is, a striking *example* to warn all of the fatal consequences of sin. For “*it* shall be”; all ancient versions have “*thou*,” which the connection favors.³⁶

Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 5:13–17). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 5:13–17). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 5:15). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Ezekiel 5:16

When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for *their* destruction, *and* which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread:

Clarke: The evil arrows of famine—Famine and pestilence are represented as poisoned arrows, inflicting death wherever they wound. The ancients represented them in the same way.

ESV: The commentary now connects with the famine, alluding to the second symbolic action (4:9–17), including the distinctive break your supply of bread (see 4:16).

Chuck Smith: So God speaks of the judgment that is going to come, warning the people, "Hey, don't think that Jerusalem is going to conquer. Don't think that you're going to be delivered soon." God's judgment is not yet complete. He is going to bring utter devastation unto the city of Jerusalem. It's to be destroyed, those that remain there to the present time, a third of them will be killed with the famine, a third will be destroyed by the sword, the third that escape will also be destroyed, for He'll send out a sword against them.

And so then he makes a prophecy as we move on against the mountains of Israel. Now as we get to chapter 34, again, a prophecy to the mountains of Israel, but in chapter 34, it's God beginning His work of restoration. Remember the devastation is going to come, but after the devastation in time to come, God is going to restore. And so we are living in those days now, when God has begun His work of restoration. And as you read the thirty-fourth chapter and read of what God is going to do, "cause the mountains" --he's speaking here of the curses that are going to come upon the mountains because they've built altars upon them. They're going to be barren and so forth, and thus they were for centuries, for millenniums. But then in chapter 34, the prophecies again to the mountains and the restoration, and God is going to put trees on them and there'll be vineyards on them and so forth. And you go to Israel today, you can see the fulfillment of chapter 34 as God has begun His work of restoration in the land.

So the book of Ezekiel is exciting, because it tells, you know, of the judgment, which did come, but it also tells of the future restoration, which is happening today. And so the book of Ezekiel goes from the past history, but it will come right up to current events and then it'll go on into the future and gets ahead of us, even from where we are at this point. And so, you're going to find it an extremely fascinating book as we go through it. Father, we thank You for Thy Word. Oh, God help us that we might devour Thy Word. That it might become a part of our lives. That we'll be able, then Lord, to speak Thy Word even as You have commanded us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

May the Lord bless and keep you through the week. And may you live after the Spirit, walk after the Spirit, follow after the Spirit, be filled with the Spirit. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Therefore, let a man examine himself, for if we will judge ourselves, then we will not be judged of God. For I speak to you in the name of the Lord, if you are living and walking after the flesh and indulging in the areas and the things of the flesh, God will bring you into judgment. It will destroy you. You need to walk after the Spirit and may God guide and help you. In Jesus' name.

Ezekiel 5:17

So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken *it*.

Missler: Jer 23:3. Notice that the remnant is gathered not from Babylon, but from all countries.

This concept of the remnant is going to be intertwined with promises to restore them to their land. Isa 11 says that when they are called back to their land the second time, it would be the final time. The first time they were called back from Babylon, from one country. The second time was from May 14, 1948 onwards.

Watch the role of Jerusalem in prophecy. In the end of chapter 5, God pronounced on Jerusalem the 4 scourges of famine, evil beasts, pestilence and sword (mentioned in Lev 26:14-26). Ezekiel continually roots these judgments from the Torah.

Constable: The Lord would send famine-like arrows against His people to destroy them. Also wild beasts, plague, hemorrhage (associated with disease) or possibly cannibalism, and war would be His instruments to judge them (cf. Lev. 26:21-26). These are standard curses for covenant unfaithfulness referred to frequently in the Mosaic Law (e.g., Lev. 26:22, 26, 29; Deut. 28:21, 53-56; 32:23-25, 42; cf. Lam. 1:7-14; 2:20-22; 4:4—10). All this Yahweh solemnly promised to do.

"The categorical imperative that rested on Ezekiel to carry out this task of watchman is reminiscent of that of Paul to 'warn everyone and teach everyone' (Col 1:24-29, esp. v 28). This imperative, both prophetic and apostolic, underscores the need for God's people to covet a strong sense of his will in matters of their own hearts and habits."

Clarke: **So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee**—Wild beasts always multiply in depopulated countries. In England, wolves abounded when the country was thinly peopled, it is now full of inhabitants, and there is not one wolf in the land. Nebuchadnezzar and his Chaldeans may be called here evil beasts. He is often compared to a lion, Jeremiah 4:7; Daniel 7:14; on account of the ravages made by him and his Chaldean armies.

McGee: Ezekiel's warning to the people went unheeded. The destruction of Jerusalem and the suffering endured by the people should be a warning to us of the reality of divine judgment. But we are so far removed from it, and very few people are really acquainted with the Word of God today. (The greatest sin among Christians is ignorance of the Word of God.) God gave this warning to the people of Jerusalem, but it has a message for us also, as does all Scripture. My friend, when the judgment of God begins, it is going to be too late to make your decision. Today, if you will hear His voice, He says, "(... behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation.)" (2 Cor. 6:2, italics mine). The real "Now Generation" are those who have not postponed their decision but have already accepted God's salvation.³⁷

McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 5:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Twenty-one Predictions—Fulfilled (Dake):

1. A fire will come forth into all Israel (Ezekiel 5:4).
2. I will execute judgments in the midst of you in the sight of the nations (Ezekiel 5:8).
3. I will do in you that which I have not done, and something that I will never do again, because of your abominations (Ezekiel 5:9).
4. Fathers will eat sons in your midst, and sons will eat fathers (Ezekiel 5:10).
5. I will execute judgments in your midst.
6. The whole remnant of you will I scatter into all the winds.
7. I will also diminish you (Ezekiel 5:11).
8. My eye will not spare you.
9. I will not have pity on you.
10. A third part of you will die with the pestilence (Ezekiel 5:12).
11. A third part will fall by the sword round about.
12. A third will I scatter and draw out a sword after them.
13. I will cause My fury to rest upon you, and I will be comforted (Ezekiel 5:13).
14. They will know I have spoken it in My zeal when My fury is ended.
15. I will make you waste, and a reproach among the nations that are round about, and in the sight of all who pass by (Ezekiel 5:14-15).
16. I will execute judgments upon you in anger and fury (Ezekiel 5:15).
17. I will send upon them My evil arrows of famine which will be for their destruction (Ezekiel 5:16).
18. I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread.
19. I will send famine and evil beasts and they will bereave you (Ezekiel 5:17).
20. I will send pestilence and blood through your land.
21. I will bring the sword upon you.

Seven Things Ezekiel Was to Do in Pantomime (Dake):

1. Take a barber's razor and shave your head and beard (Ezekiel 5:1).
2. Take balances and weigh and divide the hair (Ezekiel 5:2).
3. Burn a third in the fire in the midst of the city when the siege is completed.
4. Cut a third part with a knife.
5. Scatter a third part in the wind, and I will draw a sword after them.
6. Take a few in number and bind them in your skirts (Ezekiel 5:3).
7. Then take the few again and cast them into the midst of the fire and burn them (Ezekiel 5:4).