

Message #8

Ezekiel 5:1-17

If you ever are in a discussion with someone about God, typically one of the arguments you will hear will be an argument that goes something like this: With all of the suffering that is going on, where is your God? Why are there so many destructive things? Why are there wars? Why are there hurricanes and floods and tornadoes and tragic things that happen? Why doesn't God step in and do something?

Ezekiel says God is doing something. In fact, Ezekiel says God sovereignly controls all of the negative disasters that are happening all over the world. **What most people do not realize is that all of the suffering and disaster is sovereignly orchestrated and controlled by God in order to get people to turn to Him.** Typically people just sailing along in life don't much care about God and His Word so at times God sends some devastating things. If people would turn to Him, they would see God do some amazing things. But herein lies the problem with most, including God's own people.

This is a context in which God is using odd signs to communicate truth to Israel. Those signs are specifically revealed by His prophet, Ezekiel. Apparently, every day Ezekiel was to go out of his house and do some very odd things. First, he was to take a brick and draw Jerusalem on it and then play war against it. Second, he was to lie down bound with ropes for 430 days; 390 days on the left side and 40 days on the right side. Third, he was to take a small ration of unclean bread and water and eat and drink it every day.

We must assume at this point that Ezekiel had the attention of the people of Israel, who were already in captivity in Babylon. Ezekiel must have been the talk of the city. Probably every day the people said let's go over to Ezekiel's house and see what he is doing today. He must have been the talk of the town. He was doing some very strange things. Well they were about to see something else. This time Ezekiel would shave his beard and hair.

Probably some people thought Ezekiel had lost his mind and many checked in with him to get a good laugh; just like when Noah was building the ark. The people thought it was funny. But there was nothing funny about this. What we see here is this:

GOD TOLD EZEKIEL TO CUT HIS HAIR AND BEARD TO SHOW ISRAEL THE HUMILIATION SHE WOULD EXPERIENCE BECAUSE OF THE HORRIFIC JUDGMENT OF GOD.

This final sign in this series is designed to show Israel what was about to happen to Jerusalem.

Notice **verse 1** begins with Ezekiel being addressed as "son of man." This term means he is a real man, but he also is on a Divine son ship mission from Almighty God. In many ways, Ezekiel is an illustration of Jesus Christ. For example, when he was told to do something physical that bore the iniquity of the people (4:4, 5, 6), that is exactly what Jesus Christ would ultimately do.

Now the assignment given to Ezekiel seems very odd. He was to publicly do seven things:

Assignment #1 - He was to take a sharp sword and cut off his hair and beard. **5:1a**

This was something no priest would ever do. In fact, if an Israelite priest shaved his head, he was defiled and no longer considered to be holy to God.

We read in Leviticus 21:5-6, “They shall not make any baldness on their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards, nor make any cuts in their flesh. They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God, for they represent the offerings by fire to the LORD the bread of their God; so they shall be holy.” No priest was to ever shave off his hair.

However, in this case, this is exactly what God wanted Ezekiel to do. The people would have gasped if they had seen that. He was to take a “sharp sword” and cut off his hair and beard.

He was to use the sword as a barber’s razor. But it is noteworthy to point out that the noun “sword” is the same noun used in **verse 12**, which refers to a military that will kill one third of the people. Now a razor-sharp sword would cut swiftly and successfully.

When Israel as a nation had their heads shaved, it was a sign of horrible judgment and terrible humiliation (Ez. 27:31). We have seen images of the poor Jews captured by Hitler with their heads shaved. That is not a sign of happy blessings, but horrible humiliation.

Assignment #2 - He was to weigh the hair and divide it into thirds. **5:1b**

The actual point of weighing the hair was to show that God was weighing their works. He was evaluating and analyzing the works of His own people and the results will not be good.

What we learn from this weighing is that no judgment of God is haphazard. All judgment is precisely measured and executed. Ezekiel was to cut off his hair and weigh it and put it into three equal piles.

Assignment #3 - He was to burn one third of the hair in the center of the city. **5:2**

After Ezekiel’s 430 days captivity siege illustration was completed, God says I want you to burn one third of your hair at the center of the city to symbolize those that God would allow to die in the city. By the way, much of this, not yet all of it did happen literally when Nebuchadnezzar went into Jerusalem (II Kings 25:9).

Assignment #4 - He is to strike one third of the hair with a sword around the city. **5:2b**

Next he was to take one third of it and go around the city and cut that third up with a sword. This symbolizes those God would allow to die out side of the city, trying to escape, some of which was fulfilled during the days of Nebuchadnezzar (II Kings 25:18-21).

Assignment #5 - He was to scatter one third of the hair in the wind. **5:2c**

Next Ezekiel was to take one third of the hair and throw it up into the wind and let it scatter. This symbolizes those God would be exiled outside of the city. This, too, was literally fulfilled during the days of Nebuchadnezzar (II Kings 25:11, 21). God did let the nation blow out away from her land in exile in other nations. In many ways, this is still true today.

Assignment #6 - He is to take some hair and bind them in the edges of his robe. **5:3**

This apparently symbolizes those few who were committed to the Word of God. There were a few strands of people who loved God and loved God's Word and they loved the teaching of the prophet. They apparently loved what Ezekiel had to teach them.

Assignment #7 - He is to take some of the hair and throw them into the fire. **5:4**

This symbolizes that even some of those committed to the Word of God would be killed. When the fires of judgment come against Israel, even some of the faithful will suffer.

Now God specifically says in verse 5 that this all refers to Jerusalem. There are three facts that Ezekiel brings out about Jerusalem:

(Fact #1) - God originally set Jerusalem to be the center of all the nations. **5:5**

Israel should be the best display of the power and blessings of God in the entire world. All nations should be able to look at her and say there is the presence and power and glory of God. God gave her a rich land and she had lands all around her. Jerusalem was a special city chosen by God and God put her in a very special location. God had set His own name on this city. He designated Jerusalem as the city where His name would be honored and He would be worshipped. His presence was to be in this very city.

(Fact #2) - God's people rebelled against God's Word more than the surrounding nations. **5:6-7**

The nation Israel so rebelled against God's Word that she actually became more wicked than the nations and countries around her. Instead of her becoming a great light for the glory of God, she had become the darkest blot on the face of the earth. The real issue was that the people of God refused to obey the written Word of God.

It is a very sad day when God says of His own people, you are worse than the heathens. That is what He said about Israel.

(Fact #3) - God warns His people of a ferocious judgment He will send against them. **5:8-12**

Now let us say that some of these kinds of things happened during various captivities; but not all of the things have happened yet. These are horrible and terrible judgments that God will authorize to come against Israel.

Verse 8 makes it crystal clear that it is God who is executing His own judgment against His own people in plain view of the nations of the world. **God's people need to know this; God can authorize the worst kinds of catastrophes to hit His own people. If He did it to Israel, He can do that to us.**

God's people were so rebellious that He would do horrible, judgmental things against them in the presence of heathen nations. Whenever God does something like this to His own people, sin has reached a very depraved and non-repentant level.

Verse 9 clearly explains why God is doing this; because of her abominations. God is sanctioning horrible judgments to come against Israel and against Jerusalem because of her rebellion.

Now I want you to notice that at the end of **verse 9** there is a judgment referred to that is predicted to occur that will be something like God will never do again. The details of what is described here have never been fulfilled, including during the time of Adolph Hitler. So we believe the time is coming.

So Ezekiel predicts that there is a judgment coming, the likes of which has never been that is very unique. It will be a judgment of worldwide impact. This judgment contains very specific predictions. There are six horrible predictions:

Horrible Prediction #1 - Fathers and sons will eat each other. **5:10a**

There are some very rare references to the fact that there will come a judgment against Israel that will actually be so severe that people will revert to cannibalism to survive. Jeremiah described this same judgment in Lamentations 4:9-11 and said that not only would fathers and sons be involved in this, but so would mothers.

Horrible Prediction #2 - Israel will be scattered in every direction out of Israel. **5:10b**

Believe this will happen ultimately when the Antichrist sits in the Temple of Jerusalem and demands that he be worshipped as God.

Horrible Prediction #3 - God will withdraw all blessings from Israel and show no pity. **5:11**

Because of her abominations, God will show no mercy. She has defiled His sanctuary.

Horrible Prediction #4 - God will cause one third to die by plague or famine. **5:12a**

Horrible Prediction #5 - God will cause one third to die by sword. **5:12b**

Horrible Prediction #6 - God will cause one third to scatter all over the world. **5:12c**

This prediction clearly coincides with what Zechariah predicts will happen in the Tribulation. Two thirds of the nation Israel will die and one third will survive (Zech. 13:8-9).

Now all of the Jews will be chased all over the world. This will be a worldwide attempt to exterminate every Jew from the face of the earth.

Now in verses 13-17, God describes that this is all due to His anger and wrath. He is permitting all of these horrible things to happen to Israel to appease His wrath. Israel has mocked God; she has mocked His Word and she has rejected His Son.

Verse 13 says that Israel will know this is the wrath of God when it happens. They will not be asking why; they will know why.

Now **verses 14-15** explain that when this specific judgment occurs, not only will Israel know why it is happening, but also the nations will know that this is a fulfillment of the sovereign plan of the Sovereign God.

Verse 15 says this judgment will specifically make a statement to the nations. It will be:

- 1) Israel is a reproach;
- 2) Israel is a reviling nation;
- 3) Israel is a warning to the nations;
- 4) Israel is an object of anger and wrath to the nations.

God says in **verse 15** that He is going to target Israel in executing judgments against her in anger, wrath, and raging rebukes.

Now we know that this has clear Tribulation applications because of what is stated in **verses 16-17**. When this specific wrath judgment comes, there will be:

- 1) Horrible famines that will kill;
- 2) Wild beasts will kill;
- 3) Plagues will kill;
- 4) War and bloodshed will kill.

The inclusion of all of these judgments together most definitely connects us to the seal judgments of the Tribulation. In fact, some of these very things are mentioned to occur in the fourth seal judgment in Revelation 6:8.

Now you may thumb your nose at God and His Word. You may say this is crazy talk; I don't like a God who judges like that. To you we say—too bad. You don't have to like it but you better heed it. If God would do this to Israel, He most certainly will do this to any of His people who persist in rebellion.

Some principles:

- 1) If God's people remain disobedient, God will judge.**
- 2) Obedience to God can be a life or death matter.**
- 3) There are serious and deadly consequences to persistent rebellious sin.**
- 4) God gives warnings to His people to turn from sin and turn to Him.**