Ezekiel 5

This Is Jerusalem: Judgment Weighed to the Hair

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God shaved His people like a mourner shaves his head and weighed out their judgment to the hair. Jerusalem was placed at the center to show the nations what God is like — and instead she became worse than they were. More light brings more responsibility. Yet even here, a few hairs are tucked into the prophet's robe.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

Scripture in the text and key-verse cards: King James Version (public domain). Quotations in the notes: New American Standard Bible® (NASB 1995), © The Lockman Foundation; used by permission. Commentary sources: David Guzik, Enduring Word.

00 The Text

EZEKIEL 5 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions | Green Command / instruction | ⇄ Sky Key repeated word

⚠ Rose Sin / warning | ★ Violet Promise / blessing | ◷ Amber Time / place / contrast

[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.

[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.

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

[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.

[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.

[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.

[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;

[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.

[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 abomi ⇄ nations.

[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.

[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 abomi ⇄ nations, therefore will I also diminish thee; ▲ neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity.

[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.

[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.

[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.

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.

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:

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.

Marked in the text

- **v1** take thee a barber's razor
- **v1** take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair
- **v2** a third part *(every occurrence)*
- **v2** I will draw out a sword after them
- **v3** a few in number
- **v3** bind them in thy skirts
- **v4** a fire come forth into all the house of Israel
- **v5** This is Jerusalem
- **v5** I have set it in the midst of the nations
- **v5** nations *(every occurrence)*
- **v6** changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations
- **v6** they have refused my judgments and my statutes
- **v8** I, even I, am against thee
- **v9** because of all thine abominations
- **v10** the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee
- **v11** as I live, saith the Lord GOD
- **v11** thou hast defiled my sanctuary
- **v11** neither shall mine eye spare
- **v13** Thus shall mine anger be accomplished
- **v13** I will be comforted
- **v13** I the LORD have spoken it *(every occurrence)*
- **v14** a reproach among the nations
- **v16** the evil arrows of famine
- **v17** famine and evil beasts

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 5:5 (KJV)

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.

Setting

This chapter continues the sign-acts of chapter 4, still in the early years of Ezekiel's ministry among the exiles in Babylon (about 593 BC; 1:2). Ezekiel is still lying out his days of siege (4:4–8), and "when

the days of the siege are completed" (v2) he performs one more sign. Then, for the first time in the book, God explains the signs in plain words: "This is Jerusalem" (v5).

Structure

- vv1–4 — **the hair sign:** "take a sharp sword" and use it as a barber's razor on head and beard; "Then take scales for weighing and divide the hair" (v1). "One third you shall burn in the fire" in the city, one third strike with the sword, one third "scatter to the wind; and I will unsheathe a sword behind them" (v2). Keep "a few in number" and "bind them in the edges of your robes" (v3) — then throw some of those into the fire, and "a fire will spread to all the house of Israel" (v4).
- vv5–7 — **the charge:** "This is Jerusalem; I have set her at the center of the nations" (v5). But "she has rebelled against My ordinances more wickedly than the nations" and they "have not walked in My statutes" (v6). They have not even lived up to the standards of the nations around them (v7).
- vv8–10 — **the sentence:** "Behold, I, even I, am against you" — judgment "in the sight of the nations" (v8). "I will do among you what I have not done, and the like of which I will never do again" (v9). "Fathers will eat their sons among you" (v10), and God will "scatter all your remnant to every wind" (v10).
- vv11–12 — **the oath and the thirds:** "as I live" — because "you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols," "My eye will have no pity" (v11). A third die by plague and famine, a third fall by the sword, a third are scattered with a sword behind them (v12).
- vv13–17 — **the wrath spent:** "Thus My anger will be spent," "I will be appeased," and "they will know that I, the LORD, have spoken in My zeal" (v13). Jerusalem becomes "a desolation and a reproach among the nations" (v14) — "a reproach, a reviling, a warning and an object of horror" (v15). "The deadly arrows of famine" (v16), "famine and wild beasts," plague, blood and the sword (v17). "I, the LORD, have spoken" (vv13, 15, 17).

Repeated words

nations (vv5, 6, 7, 8, 14, 15); judgments (vv8, 10, 15); ordinances / statutes (vv6, 7); sword (vv1, 2, 12, 17); third (vv2, 12); scatter (vv2, 10, 12); famine (vv12, 16, 17); anger / wrath (vv13, 15); abominations (vv9, 11); "I, the LORD, have spoken" (vv13, 15, 17).

Contrasts

Set "at the center of the nations" (v5) ⟷ a reproach "among the nations" (v14). Given God's ordinances ⟷ worse than nations who never had them (vv6–7). Hair weighed exactly on scales (v1) ⟷ scattered to the wind (v2). The whole head shaved ⟷ "a few in number" bound in the robe (v3). God's sanctuary (v11) ⟷ detestable idols set in it (v11). "My eye will have no pity" (v11) ⟷ the remnant still kept (v3).

Chapter theme (my words)

God shaved His people like a mourner shaves his head and weighed out their judgment to the hair. Jerusalem was placed at the center to show the nations what God is like — and instead she became worse than they were. More light brings more responsibility. Yet even here, a few hairs are tucked into the prophet's robe.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 5:11 (KJV)

[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 abomi ⇄ nations, therefore will I also diminish thee; ▲ neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity.

The razor and the scales (vv1–2)

Guzik counts this as Ezekiel's fourth sign of judgment, after the three in chapter 4. Shaving the head and beard meant mourning and disgrace — Clarke, in Guzik: "*Cutting off the hair* was a sign of *mourning*." For a priest it was worse. Feinberg notes shaving was forbidden to priests (Lev 21:5) and "ordinarily meant the loss of priestly status and position." The razor is a sword — Block notes the word in Ezekiel always means a military weapon. Babylon's army would be God's razor (compare Isa 7:20). The scales show precision: Feinberg says "the judgment was a discriminating one," and Trapp, "God's judgments are just to a hair's weight." Some (Smith, Alexander) take "the center of the city" as the brick-model of 4:1.

The few hairs (vv3–4)

A handful is saved in the hem of the robe — a remnant. Clarke, in Guzik, identifies them with the few Jews left in the land after 586 BC under Gedaliah. Even some of those go into the fire (v4). Jeremiah records how that remnant was shattered by Gedaliah's murder and the flight to Egypt (Jer 41–44). The point stands both ways: God always keeps a remnant, and being part of it is no excuse for complacency.

"This is Jerusalem" (vv5–7)

The exiles hoped God would judge Babylon. Instead God points at His own city. Guzik notes Israel was central both geographically — between the great empires — and in God's plan of redemption. Wright, in Guzik, calls Jerusalem "the spiritual centre of the earth." But Wiersbe, in Guzik: "privilege involves responsibility and accountability." Jerusalem had the Law, the temple and the prophets, and still rebelled "more wickedly than the nations" (v6). Block, in Guzik: "Ezekiel's characterization of his people as more wicked than the nations is justified." Feinberg: "reckoning must be in proportion to spiritual knowledge and privileges enjoyed" (compare Luke 12:47–48; Amos 3:2).

"I, even I, am against you" (vv8–10)

Block, in Guzik, hears the language of a challenge to single combat. The judgment would be unique in Israel's history (v9); Guzik notes that later judgments, such as Jerusalem's fall to the Romans, equaled or surpassed it. Verse 10 is the most terrible line: parents and children eating one another. This was one of the covenant curses Moses had warned of (Lev 26:29; Deut 28:53–57). Clarke, in Guzik, ties its fulfillment to Lamentations 4:10 — compassionate women boiling their own children in the siege (also Lam 2:20).

The oath and the thirds (vv11–12)

God swears "as I live" — the living God against dead idols. The cause is named: they defiled His sanctuary with detestable idols (chapter 8 will show Ezekiel what this looked like). The three thirds of hair are now explained: plague and famine inside the walls, the sword at the walls, and scattering with the sword following the exiles (fulfilled in 2 Kgs 25; Jer 52).

God's zeal (vv13–17)

God's anger "will be spent" — it had been building through centuries of patience, and now it would run its course. "I will be appeased" (KJV "comforted") means God's justice will be satisfied. Taylor, in Guzik, notes the Hebrew word for zeal "covers both zeal and jealousy, as well as resentment and indignation." This is not petty temper; it is the jealous love of a husband betrayed (Exod 34:14). The four judgments of v17 — famine, wild beasts, plague and sword — are the covenant curses of Leviticus 26:22–26; Poole, in Guzik, links them to the "four sore judgments" of Ezekiel 14:21. Jerusalem would become "a warning" to the nations (v15): the city meant to display God's glory would now display His justice.

Word study (Hebrew)

- **sword — *chereb* (H2719):** a sword, a weapon of war.
- **razor — *taar* (H8593):** a razor; a knife or sheath.
- **scales — *mozen* (H3976):** a pair of balances.
- **third — *shelishi* (H7992):** a third part.
- **edges — *kanaph* (H3671):** a wing; the corner or hem of a garment.
- **rebelled — *marah* (H4784):** to be contentious, bitterly rebellious.
- **ordinances — *mishpat* (H4941):** a judgment, a just decision; God's rulings.
- **statutes — *chuqqah* (H2708):** a fixed decree, an engraved ordinance.
- **abominations — *toebah* (H8441):** something disgusting, detestable to God.
- **detestable idols — *shiqquts* (H8251):** a filthy, detestable thing; an idol.
- **pity — *chus* (H2347):** to have compassion, spare (the eye "pitying").
- **spare — *chamal* (H2550):** to spare, show mercy.
- **appeased — *nacham* (H5162):** to be comforted, eased; to relent.
- **zeal — *qinah* (H7068):** ardor, zeal, jealousy.
- **wrath — *chemah* (H2534):** heat, fury, rage.
- **reproach — *cherpah* (H2781):** disgrace, scorn.

Cross-references

Lev 21:5; Lev 26:22–33; Deut 4:5–8; Deut 28:53–57; 2 Kgs 25:1–21; Isa 7:20; Jer 41:1–3; Jer 43:4–7; Jer 52:4–16; Lam 2:20; Lam 4:10; Ezek 6:8; Ezek 14:21; Amos 3:2; Matt 11:21–24; Luke 12:47–48; Rom 2:17–24; Heb 10:26–31.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 5:1 (KJV)

[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.

Command to obey — walk in His statutes

Jerusalem's sin was not ignorance; it was refusal — "they have rejected My ordinances" (v6). God doesn't need me to know more as much as He needs me to walk in what I already know. Today I'll take one thing I know God has told me and actually do it.

Sin to confess — idols in the sanctuary

God's charge was that they "defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols" (v11). My body is His temple now (1 Cor 6:19). I'll ask Him to show me what I've set up in the place that belongs to Him — screens, approval, comfort, control — and I'll confess it by name.

Warning to heed — more light, more accountability

Jerusalem had more than the nations and did worse. I grew up around Bibles, sermons and church. That doesn't make me safer; it makes me more responsible. For the men I disciple who were raised in church and walked away: your past knowledge isn't a cushion. It's a call to come home now.

Promise to trust — a few hairs in the hem

Even in the worst judgment of Israel's history, God kept "a few in number" bound in the prophet's robe (v3). For the man who feels like his whole life has been shaved off and burned — family gone, freedom gone, name gone — God still keeps a remnant. He hasn't let go of the hem.

Example to follow — Ezekiel's costly obedience

A priest shaved his head, weighed his own hair and burned it in front of everybody. He let his body become the message. I want my life — my habits, my marriage, my work, the books and tools I build — to carry God's word, not just my words.

Worship

You are the living God who swears by Your own life. Your judgments are exact to the hair. Your zeal is a jealous love that will not share Your people with idols. And You keep a remnant.

Prayer

Lord GOD, I don't want to be a Jerusalem that had everything and despised it. Search my heart and clear the idols out of Your sanctuary. Keep me in the hem of Your garment, and keep the men I walk with there too. Thank You that Jesus took the fire of judgment for us, so that we could be kept. Amen.