

Ezekiel 5:1-17 – The Hair, the Fire, and the Warning of God

In this chapter, God gives Ezekiel the fourth symbolic act meant to confront His people with the seriousness of their rebellion and the reality of the judgment that is coming. The exile in Babylon has not softened their hearts. They continue to believe that Jerusalem will stand, that God will rescue them in spite of their sin, and that their lives can continue unchanged.

But God calls Ezekiel to deliver a message that cannot be ignored—a message acted out in ways that shock, disturb, and wake people up.

1. Shaving the Head and Beard – A Sign of Deep Humiliation

“And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber’s razor, and pass it over your head and your beard...” (Ezekiel 5:1, NKJV)

God commands Ezekiel to shave his head and beard—an act that was considered humiliating and shameful for a Hebrew man. It represented mourning, judgment, and the removal of God’s protection. People would not be able to ignore this sight.

Then Ezekiel must weigh and divide his hair into three parts:

1. A third burned with fire
2. A third chopped with a sword
3. A third scattered to the wind

“And I will draw out a sword after them.” (Ezekiel 5:2, NKJV)

Each portion symbolizes what will happen to the people of Jerusalem.

2. A Few Hairs Saved—Then Thrown Into the Fire

“You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment. Then take some of them again and throw them into the midst of the fire...” (Ezekiel 5:3-4, NKJV)

A tiny remnant is tucked into Ezekiel’s garment, representing the small group God will preserve. But even some of these are burned, showing that even among the survivors, hardship and refining will continue.

This is not cruelty. It is clarity. God is showing them the full picture:

- A small remnant will be preserved.
- But the nation as a whole will pass through devastating judgment because they refused to turn back to God.

3. The Reason for the Judgment – Rebellion Against God’s Word

“Thus says the Lord God: ‘This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations... She has rebelled against My judgments... they have not walked in My statutes.’” (Ezekiel 5:5-7, NKJV)

Jerusalem was meant to be a light to the nations—a city set in the center of the world to reflect God’s truth. Instead, they twisted His commandments, abandoned His ways, and embraced practices worse than the surrounding nations.

God does not judge because He is harsh. He judges because His people have *taken what is holy and turned it toward evil*. God’s wrath and judgment are not arbitrary or impulsive; they are the natural result of separating ourselves from Him. When we refuse to trust that God knows what is best for us and desires to give us the best, we place ourselves outside the safety of His presence and protection. Scripture reminds us, “Be sure your sin will find you out,” and “You reap what you sow.” These are not merely warnings—they describe the inevitable consequences of rejecting God, resisting His guidance, and turning from who He is. When we choose distance from Him, we also choose the painful results of that distance. Apart from Him, all that remains is heartache, emptiness, and destruction.

4. The Coming Catastrophe

God announces a level of judgment so severe that it shocks the senses:

“Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers...”
(Ezekiel 5:10, NKJV)

This horrifying image is not an exaggeration. Historical records show that cannibalism truly occurred during the siege of Jerusalem. Sin always leads further than we ever imagined, taking us places we never thought we’d go.

God then explains the threefold division of judgment:

1. One-third die of famine and disease
2. One-third die by the sword
3. One-third are scattered—and still pursued by hardship

“Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will be avenged... they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it in My zeal...” (Ezekiel 5:13, NKJV)

This is not blind rage. It is righteous zeal—the holy response of a just God whose people have mocked His grace, despised His mercy, and embraced abominations. God is allowing the Jews to experience what they themselves have chosen—a life separated from Him.

5. A Warning to the Nations and a Witness to the World

God declares that His judgment will be so severe that nations around will be astonished and instructed by it:

“So it shall be a reproach, a taunt, a lesson, and an astonishment to the nations...”
(Ezekiel 5:15, NKJV)

Even judgment becomes a teaching tool. God’s character, holiness, and justice will be displayed clearly for all to see.

Practical Application

1. Sin always brings consequences.

For Judah, sin was not a moment—it was a lifestyle. They ignored warning after warning. God’s patience is enormous, but not endless. In our lives, when we justify sin or minimize disobedience, we are walking down a dangerous road.

2. God’s Word is not meant to be redefined.

Judah “changed” God’s statutes to fit their preferences. Many today try to reshape Scripture to fit cultural values, personal desires, or modern trends. God calls us to *submit* to His Word, not rewrite it.

3. God disciplines because He loves.

Judgment was not God’s desire; it was the result of persistent rebellion. When God confronts us through Scripture or conviction, it is always to lead us back to life.

4. God preserves a remnant.

Even in judgment, God kept a small group through whom He would rebuild. No matter how dark things become, God always preserves those who cling to Him.

A Challenge for Believers

- Are you allowing any area of your life to be shaped more by culture than by Scripture?
- Have you become desensitized to sin or comfortable with compromise?
- Is there a warning from God that you’ve been ignoring, hoping it will go away?

Ezekiel’s message calls us to examine our hearts. Ask the Lord:

“Search me, God. Show me where I am drifting, compromising, or resisting Your voice. Give me the courage to turn fully to You.”

God will meet you with grace, not condemnation, if you return to Him.

An Invitation to Those Who Do Not Yet Know Jesus

Ezekiel 5 is a sobering chapter. It shows the seriousness of sin and the reality of judgment. But it also points us to the greatest truth of all:

God did not leave us to face judgment alone.

Jesus came into this world, lived without sin, and willingly went to the cross. He shed His blood to save us, taking on Himself the judgment our sins deserve.

The destruction that fell on Jerusalem is a small picture of the judgment that fell on Jesus at the cross—so that you and I could be spared.

And His resurrection declares forever that He is God, Savior, and Lord, victorious over sin and death.

If you have never surrendered your life to Jesus, He is calling you today. You can turn to Him right now. You can speak to Him in your own words, but you might pray something like this:

“Lord Jesus, I know that I have sinned and that I cannot save myself. I believe You shed Your blood on the cross to save me, and that You rose from the dead, proving that You are God, Savior, and Lord. I ask You to forgive me, cleanse me, and make me new. I give my life to You. Help me to follow You from this day forward.”

If you turn to Him sincerely, He will receive you. He will forgive you. He will make you new.

And for all who already belong to Him, may this chapter remind us to walk in holiness, listen to God’s warnings, and live as people who shine His light in a dark world.