

# CHAPTER 5

## INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 5

This chapter is of the same argument with the former; and contains a type of Jerusalem's destruction; an explanation of that type; what were the reasons of God's judgments on that city; and the nature, rise, and end of them. The type is in (<sup><3181></sup>Ezekiel 5:1-4); the explanation of that type is in (<sup><3185></sup>Ezekiel 5:5); the reasons of the severe judgments threatened are changing the statutes of the Lord, and not walking in them, and defiling the sanctuary with their abominations, (<sup><3186></sup>Ezekiel 5:6-11); an account of the judgments of God, answerable to each of the parts in the type, (<sup><3182></sup>Ezekiel 5:12); the ends of these judgments are, with respect to God, the accomplishment of his anger, and the satisfaction of his justice; with respect to the Jews, bringing them to an acknowledgment that he had spoken in his zeal; and, with respect to the nations, their instruction and astonishment, (<sup><3183></sup>Ezekiel 5:13-15); and the chapter is concluded with an assurance that these judgments would be sent, (<sup><3186></sup>Ezekiel 5:16,17).

**Ver. 1.** *And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, &c.]* Or, "sword",<sup>f84</sup>. The word signifies any sharp instrument, by which anything is cut off, or cut asunder; what is here meant is explained by the following:

*take thee a barber's razor.* The Septuagint and Arabic versions read this in conjunction with the former, thus, "take thee a knife", or "sword, sharper than a barber's razor"; and so the Syriac version, "take thee a sword sharp as a barber's razor"; this sharp knife, sword, or razor, signifies, as Jarchi interprets it, Nebuchadnezzar; and very rightly; so the king of Assyria is called in (<sup><3172></sup>Isaiah 7:20):

*and cause [it] to pass upon thine head, and upon thy beard;* the "head" was a symbol of the city of Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judea; the "beard", of the cities, towns, and villages about it; and the "hair" of both, of the common people; compared to hair for their numbers, for their levity and unsteadiness, and for their being the beauty and ornament of the places where they lived; and the shaving of them denotes their disgrace and destruction, and mourning on account thereof:

*then take thee balances to weigh and divide the [hair].* The Syriac version adds, “into three parts”; signifying, that several distinct punishments would be inflicted on them, and these according to the righteous judgment of God; balances being a symbol of justice.

**Ver. 2.** *Thou, shall burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, &c.]* Of Jerusalem, as portrayed upon the tile, (<sup>2300</sup>Ezekiel 4:1); or the prophet was now in Chaldea. The burning of the third part of the hair with fire denotes such who were destroyed by the pestilence and famine during the siege; (see <sup>2350</sup>Lamentations 5:10); or it denotes the burning of the city itself, when the siege was over; since it follows:

*when the days of the siege are fulfilled;* for, when it was taken, it was burnt with fire, (<sup>2623</sup>Jeremiah 52:13);

*and thou shall take a third part, [and] smite about it with a knife;* which designs those that fled out of the city whom it was broken up, and were pursued after, and overtook by the Chaldean army, and cut off by the sword, (<sup>2637</sup>Jeremiah 52:7,8);

*and a third part thou shall scatter in the wind;* which intends those that fled, and were dispersed into several countries, as Moab, Ammon, and especially Egypt, whither many went along with Johanan the son of Kareah, (<sup>2435</sup>Jeremiah 43:5-7);

*and I will draw out a sword after them;* and destroy them; which, as it was threatened, (<sup>2426</sup>Jeremiah 42:16 44:27); so it was accomplished when Egypt was subdued by Nebuchadnezzar. The Septuagint and Arabic versions, in every clause, read a “fourth part”, instead of a “third”; but wrongly.

**Ver. 3.** *Thou shall also take thereof a few in number, &c.]* These are they that were left in the land of Judea by Nebuzaradan, for vinedressers and husbandmen, and such as returned out of Egypt into the land of Judah, (<sup>2443</sup>Jeremiah 44:28 52:16);

*and bind them in thy skirts;* in the pockets of them; signifying both the very small number of them, and their preservation. Jarchi and Kimchi interpret these of those that were carried captive to Babylon, and lived there, and were preserved, and returned again.

**Ver. 4.** *Then take of them again, &c.]* Of that small number preserved:

*and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire*: this was fulfilled in Gedaliah and the Jews that were with him, over whom the king of Babylon had made him governor, who were slain by Ishmael, (~~2410~~Jeremiah 41:1-7);

*[for] thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel*; from this barbarous murder of Gedaliah and his men, judgment came upon all the house of Israel; a war commenced between Ishmael and Johanan the son of Kareah; and afterwards Nebuzaradan carried captive great numbers of them that were left in the land. The Syriac and Arabic versions render it, “from these shall a fire come forth”, &c. which Jarchi interprets of these intimations given the prophet, from whence judgments should come upon all the house of Israel. It may be understood of those that were left in the land, and of such who returned from the captivity; for whose sins, and those of their posterity, the wrath of God came forth upon all the house of Israel, to the utter destruction of their nation, city, and temple, by Titus Vespasian.

**Ver. 5.** *Thus saith the Lord God, this [is] Jerusalem, &c.*] A type or sign of it; it may refer to both the former and latter type. It is the city of Jerusalem that is designed by the city portrayed upon the tile; and the same is signified by the head of the prophet that was to be shaved; that being not only the chief city of Judea, but of the whole world, as follows:

*I have set it in the midst of the nations*; as the chief of them; and distinguished it from them by peculiar favours and blessings, natural and spiritual; being seated in a land flowing with milk and honey; and having the house and worship of God in it; and where were the symbols of his presence, and his word and ordinances; and therefore should have excelled them in true religion, devotion, and holiness, and set an example to them. The Jews generally understand this of the natural situation of Jerusalem. Jarchi interprets it of the middle of the world; as if it was mathematically placed in the centre of the earth. Kimchi says it was in the midst of the continent; and so its air was better than others; and these sort of writers<sup>f85</sup> often speak of the land of Israel being in the navel or centre of the earth; they say<sup>f86</sup> that the sanhedrim sat in the middle of the world; and therefore is compared to the navel, (~~2110~~Song of Solomon 7:2); because it sat in the temple, which was in the middle of the world; but the former sense is best; though Jerom gives in to the latter:

*and countries [that are] round about her*: this is a proposition of itself; fire former clause being distinguished from it by the accent “athnach”; and should be rendered thus, “and the countries [are]”, or “[were], round about her”<sup>f87</sup>; on the east was Asia, on the west Europe on the south Africa and Libya, and on the north Babylon, Scythia, Armenia, Persia, and Pontus; and was mere conspicuous, eminent, and honourable than them all, having greater privileges, prerogatives, and excellencies; and therefore should have exceeded them in its regard to the laws and statutes of God, which she did not; hence this is said, in order to upbraid her for her ingratitude, as appears by the following words.

**Ver. 6.** *And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, &c.*] So they changed their glory for that which did not profit; and the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man; and the truth of God into a lie, (<sup><21></sup>Jeremiah 2:11 <sup><8023></sup>Romans 1:23,25); or, “for wickedness”<sup>f88</sup>; for judgments and laws that were not good, and which to observe was wickedness. The word rendered “changed” signifies to “rebel against” or to “transgress”: and the may be, she, that is, Jerusalem, has “rebelled” against my judgments, and “transgressed”<sup>f89</sup> them in a wicked manner, even to a greater degree than the nations of the world. The Targum and Jarchi interpret it changed as we do:

*and my statutes more than the countries that [are] round about her.*

“Judgments” and “statutes”, are the same laws and ordinances of worship, being just and righteous, and firm and unalterable; unless it should rather be thought that “judgments” belong to the moral law, being given forth by the Lord as a judge, and founded upon judgment and righteousness; and “statutes” to the ceremonial law, being of positive institution and appointment, and to last so long as it was the pleasure of the lawgiver:

*for they have refused my judgments and my statutes*; they refused to comply with them, and to yield an obedience to them, and that with loathing, disdain, and contempt, as the word<sup>f90</sup> signifies,

*they have not walked in them*; they did not make them the role of their walk and conversation; they showed no regard to them; they went out of the way of them, into crooked paths, with the workers of iniquity.

**Ver. 7.** *Therefore thus saith the Lord God, &c.*] Having observed their sins, and which are still enlarged upon, the Lord proceeds to denounce his judgments against them:

*because ye multiplied more than the nations that [are] round about you;* not in numbers, nor in wealth and riches, or in blessings and privileges, and therefore grew wanton and forgetful; though this was true: but in sins and wickedness, which abounded among them, and in which they exceeded the nations round about them; and so the Targum paraphrases it,

“because that ye have sinned more than the people that are round about you:”

*[and] have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments;* which as repeated to show the certainty of fact, and how much the Lord resented it:

*neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that [are] round about you.* The Syriac version leaves out the negative particle and renders the words thus, “but ye have done the judgments of the nations which are round about you”; and it may be observed, that it is omitted in parallel text, (<sup>Ⲙⲓⲓⲛ</sup>Ezekiel 11:12); and this is what the Jews are often reproved for, that they followed the laws and customs of the Gentiles, and worshipped their gods; and the opposition to the preceding clause seems to require this sense; but the retaining the negative particle is confirmed by the Targum, Masora, and the Septuagint and Arabic versions; and also by the Talmud<sup>f91</sup>, which reconciles the passage with the parallel text before mentioned, thus,

“according to those things which are right among them (the Gentiles) ye have not done; [but] according to what are corrupt among them ye have done;”

and the meaning is, either that they did not walk according to the law and light of nature, which the Gentiles had, and attended to, (<sup>Ⲙⲓⲓⲛ</sup>Romans 2:14,15); or that they did not follow them in their conduct and behaviour; they were not so zealous for the true God as the Heathens were for their idols; they were not so tenacious of the laws and worship the true God of Israel as the Gentiles were of their superstitious rites and ceremonies; the Gentiles did not change their gods, and manner of worship, but retained what, they received from their ancestors time immemorial; but the Jews changed their glory for that which did not profit, (<sup>Ⲙⲓⲓⲛ</sup>Jeremiah 2:11).

**Ver. 8.** *Therefore thus saith the Lord God, behold, even I, [am] against thee, &c.*] Or, “behold, I [am] against thee, even I”<sup>f92</sup>; who am the Lord God omnipotent, great King, and a dreadful one; and a terrible thing it is for a people to have the mighty God against them; or for any to fall into the hands of the living God: this is repeated to show that it certainly was so; and that the Lord was set upon it; and determined to come forth against them in the way of his judgments, as follows:

*and will execute judgments in the midst of thee, in the sight of the nations;* that is, inflict punishments upon them for their disregard to his righteous judgments, which should take place in the midst of them, and consume them all around; and should be so manifest as to be seen by all the nations about them.

**Ver. 9.** *And I will do in thee that which I have not done, &c.*] In any other nation, or to any other people; not in the old world, when the flood was brought upon the world of the ungodly; not in Sodom and Gomorrah, when they were destroyed by fire from heaven; not in Egypt, when he inflicted his plagues on Pharaoh and his people; nor among the Canaanites, when they were drove out of their land for their abominations:

*and whereunto I will not do any more the like;* at least not of a long time; and, besides, this may not only refer to the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, but also by the Romans:

*because of all thine abominations;* the wickednesses of all sorts that were committed among them, which were abominable to the Lord, and particularly their idolatries; these were the causes why he would do, or suffer to be done, things that were never seen, known or heard of before; and are as follow:

**Ver. 10.** *Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, &c.*] Which was long ago threatened by the Lord, and prophesied of by Moses, (<sup><1837></sup>Leviticus 26:27 <sup><1838></sup>Deuteronomy 28:53,55,57); and was fulfilled at several times in the people of Israel, as at the siege of Samaria, (<sup><1168></sup>2 Kings 6:28,29); at the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, (<sup><2940></sup>Lamentations 4:10); and at the siege of the same city by Titus Vespasian, as Josephus<sup>f93</sup> relates; for though these instances only show that mothers ate their children, yet no doubt the fathers took part with them; and if mothers, who are naturally more tender, could do this, it is much more reasonable to suppose that fathers did the same:

*and the sons shall eat their fathers*; this, though nowhere recorded, yet doubtless was done; it being as reasonable to think that a son might eat his father as a father his son, though both monstrously shocking:

*and I will execute judgments in thee*; punishments, such as pestilence, famine, and sword, after mentioned:

*and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds*; that is, those that remain, and are not cut off, by the above judgments, shall be carried captive into Babylon, or be dispersed in to Egypt, Ammon, Moab, and other places: this had a full accomplishment in the dispersion of the Jews into the several parts of the world, when they were destroyed by the Romans.

**Ver. 11.** *Wherefore, [as] I live, saith the Lord God, &c.*] This is a form of an oath, and shows that what is after said should certainly be done; God would not repent of it, nor revoke it:

*surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary, with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations*: that is, with their idols and idolatrous worship, which were detestable and abominable to the Lord; so Manasseh not only built altars for Baal in the house of the Lord, but set up in it a graven image of the grove, (<sup><1218B></sup>2 Kings 21:3,4,7);

*therefore will I also diminish [thee]*; as they lessened his glory by such abominable actions, so he threatens that he would lessen their privileges and blessings; as they took away from him the worship and honour that were due to him, so he would take away from them their civil and church state, his sanctuary, word, and ordinances, and deprive them of everything that was valuable and excellent. The Targum paraphrases it,

“I will cut off the strength of thine arm;”

weaken her power:

*neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity*; when in the greatest misery and distress. The Targum is,

“my Word shall not spare, &c.”

**Ver. 12.** *A third part of them shall die with the pestilence, &c.*] This, with what follows, explains the division of the hair into the three parts, and what was done with them; and shows that the burning of one third part denotes

their being destroyed by the pestilence, mentioned along with burning coals, (<sup><318></sup>Habakkuk 3:5); and by famine, as follows:

*and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee*; and though there is no account of the former, yet there is of the latter; and no doubt but the pestilence raged, as well as the famine, at the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar:

*and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee*; signified by the third part of the hair, smitten with a knife; and intends such as perished by the sword of the Chaldeans at the taking of the city, and when they fled out of it; and so are properly said to fall round about it:

*and I will scatter a third part into all the winds*; the greatest part of which were carried into Babylon, and others into other parts; (see Gill on <sup><319></sup>Ezekiel 5:2”);

*and I will draw out a sword after them*; particularly after them that went into Egypt. The Septuagint and Arabic versions read a “fourth part” in each clause, as before; and make it out thus, “a fourth part of thee shall be consumed with death (the pestilence); and a fourth part of thee shall be consumed with famine in the midst of thee; and a fourth part of thee I will scatter to every wind; and a fourth part of thee shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will draw out the sword after them”.

**Ver. 13.** *Thus shall mine anger be accomplished*, &c.] Finished, perfected, consummated, by bringing the above judgments upon them, pestilence, famine, and sword, and by scattering them to every wind: what had been threatened long, and only some drops of it were let fall in times past, now was poured forth to the uttermost:

*and I will cause my fury to rest upon them*; to continue and abide upon them, and not move, at least for the space of threescore and ten years; (see <sup><320></sup>Zechariah 1:12);

*and I will be comforted*; by taking vengeance on them; so satisfying his justice, and easing him of his enemies; (see <sup><321></sup>Isaiah 1:24); a speech after the manner of men; who, when they have been affronted, and have avenged themselves, are easy in their minds, and satisfied:

*and they shall know that I the Lord have spoken [it] in my zeal*; that is, they shall find by experience that what the Lord had spoken by his



prophets, and had threatened to bring upon them, was said in earnest, and arose from a jealousy for his own glory; this will be a clear case, and out of question:

*when I have accomplished my fury in them;* by the utter destruction of them; as follows:

**Ver. 14.** *Moreover I will make thee waste,* &c.] That is, their land; which, being without inhabitants, lay untilled; and so became barren and unfruitful:

*and a reproach among the nations that [are] round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by;* who, seeing it in this desolate condition, shall throw out their taunts and jeers upon it, as in (<sup>2115</sup>Lamentations 2:15,16).

**Ver. 15.** *So it shall be a reproach and a taunt,* &c.] The subject of the reproaches and taunts of the enemy; (see <sup>2119</sup>Jeremiah 24:9); this is repeated for the greater confirmation of it:

*an instruction;* or “discipline”, or “correction”<sup>f94</sup>. The meaning is, that the Gentiles, seeing the judgments of God upon the Jews, would hereby learn righteousness, forsake their sins, amend their ways, and fear, the Lord:

*and an astonishment unto the nations that [are] round about thee;* being amazed that such judgments should fall upon a people that had been so highly favoured of God; and at their stupidity, hardness, and incorrigibleness under them:

*when I shall execute judgments in thee in anger and in fury, and in furious rebukes;* a heap of words, not only denoting the certainty of divine judgments, but the greatness and fierceness of divine wrath, in the execution of them; that these were not fatherly chastisements, rebukes in love, but the effects of vindictive justice:

*I the Lord have spoken [it];* or those things, as the Arabic version; and as sure as I have spoken, I will do. The Targum is,

“I the Lord have decreed in my word;”

and so in (<sup>2153</sup>Ezekiel 5:13); where it is added, and I will confirm or accomplish.

**Ver. 16.** *When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famines,* &c.] Either famine itself, which is as an arrow; it is taken out of the quiver of the Lord of hosts, and is shot by him; and moves swiftly when it has a

commission; and is very destructive: or arrows which bring on a famine, such as drought, excessive rains, blasting, mildew, locusts, &c. or arrows which the famine brings, as leanness, faintness, blackness, and death; and, in either sense, are evil ones; and are sent of God for the following end:

*which shall be for [their] destruction, [and] which I will send to destroy you;* God's design in sending them was to destroy, and that was answered; and a very destroying arrow famine is, and therefore called evil:

*and I will increase the famine upon you;* or "gather<sup>f95</sup> [it] upon", or "against you"; as if it was an army with bows and arrows:

*and will break your staff of bread:* take away the virtue from the little they had, that that should not nourish and satisfy; (see Gill on "<sup>-2046</sup>Ezekiel 4:16").

**Ver. 17.** *So will I send upon you famine, and evil beasts,* &c.] Famine is repeated for the further confirmation of it; and "evil beasts" are added, by whom are meant, not the Chaldeans, comparable to such; but literally lions, wolves, bears, &c. which are threatened the Jews, in case of disobedience, (<sup>-1852</sup>Leviticus 26:22); and which sometimes were sent, (<sup>-1274</sup>2 Kings 17:24);

*and they shall bereave thee;* that is, of her children, whom the evil beasts should destroy; they not being able to defend themselves against them, as men can:

*and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee, and I will bring the sword upon thee;* the pestilence, famine, sword, which is meant by blood, and evil beasts, are the Lord's four sore judgments; (see <sup>-3441</sup>Ezekiel 14:21).

*I the Lord have spoken [it]:* who was able to perform it, and did, both at the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and by Titus.