

Divine Punishment Follows Unrepentant Sin, part 2

Our study is from Ezekiel 5:1-17. It is the second part of the overview of the destruction of Jerusalem that began in Ezekiel 4:1. In our last study we learned about three of four signs that give us an overview of God's plan for the destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and the city of Jerusalem. Since our study is about the fourth sign and Yahweh's interpretation of the signs, we will do a short review of the three signs in chapter 4 before beginning our study of chapter five.

The first sign in chapter 4 was about a clay brick on which an outline of the city of Jerusalem was inscribed (Ezekiel 4:1-3). The sign revealed that Yahweh, Himself, would be the active force that helped the Babylonian army defeat the city of Jerusalem, and the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

The second sign was that of the prophet's position (Ezekiel 4:4-8). The prophet was to lie down facing north toward

the northern kingdom for 390 days. Then he was to lie down facing south toward the southern kingdom for 40 days. The prophet Ezekiel would also be bound during these days. This sign revealed that Yahweh also would control how long the Babylonian army would be engaged in the attack and that the attack would be successful.

Then Yahweh gave Ezekiel the third sign, the sign of the polluted bread (Ezekiel 4:9-17). This sign revealed that Yahweh would cause a famine to exist during the Babylonian army's

assault, and people would be appalled with each other. It was also a sign of defilement. Ezekiel 4:16 states that as a result of the famine, horror would occur. In this study, we will discover why we are told horror will occur. We are also going to learn the meaning of the fourth sign. Then Yahweh, Himself, will give us the meaning of these signs.

SIGN OF THE SWORD. The sign of the sword is given to us in Ezekiel 5:1-4. Verse 1 states,

As for you, son of man, take a sharp sword; take and use it as a barber's razor on your head and beard. Then take scales for weighing and divide the hair. Ezekiel 5:1 (NASB)



Once again Yahweh called Ezekiel "son of man" or "human." Then Yahweh told the prophet to take a sharp sword and use it to cut off the hair on his head and beard. This would have

been a humiliating act for Ezekiel since he was a priest (2 Samuel 10:4-5). Leviticus 19:27 and 21:5 prohibited a priest from shaving off all of his hair.

Shaving Ezekiel's hair was a sign of the humiliation that the citizens in Jerusalem and the two kingdoms would experience by the Babylonian army's crushing defeat in 586 B.C. The Hebrew word for "sharp sword" refers to a military weapon. This sword had to be extremely sharp in order to be used as a razor. This helps us understand that ancient swords could be

very sharp. It is important to notice that the sword symbolized King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonian army. Now, we understand why this sign is called the sign of the sword.

After Ezekiel cut off all of his hair, he was told to put it on a scale and weigh it. Yahweh told him to divide his hair into thirds. Verse 2 says,

One third you shall burn in the fire at the center of the city, when the days of the siege are completed. Then you shall take one third and strike it with the sword all around the city, and one third you shall scatter to the wind; and I will unsheathe a sword behind them. Ezekiel 5:2 (NASB)

This verse describes what the prophet would do after the 430 days of lying on his side that was described in Ezekiel 4:4-9. So, after the 430 days, the prophet cut off his hair, weighed it, and divided it into three piles. This means the three piles of hair symbolized the conditions that would exist at the end of the Babylonian army's victory. That is what the verse says, "when the days of the siege are completed."

This sign is about three piles of hair. One third of his hair symbolized the fact that the center of the city of Jerusalem would be on fire at the end of the siege. The next pile of hair symbolized the fact that the Babylonian army would slaughter one third of the people of Jerusalem as they fled from all around the city.

The third pile of hair symbolized that one third of the citizens would successfully escape the city and flee in every direction, but the Babylonian army would pursue them and kill them.

Next, verse 3 prophesied that God would protect a few of the people—a remnant.

Take also a few in number from them and bind them in the edges of your robes. Ezekiel 5:3 (NASB)

The Hebrew word for "bind" can also mean "roll." That is, Ezekiel was told to roll some of his hairs into the hem of his garment. This symbolized the act of protecting these hairs. Some of the citizens of Jerusalem would be protected from the Babylonian army.

However, verse 4 adds that some of the remnant would still die.

Take again some of them and throw them into the fire and burn them in the fire; from it a fire will spread to all the house of Israel. Ezekiel 5:4 (NASB)

The statement "a fire will spread to all the house of Israel," seems to mean that even the remnant will not completely escape. Since the remnant that escapes will include believers and unbelievers, this may mean that some of the unbelievers will die. Daniel and his three friends did not escape persecution, but they did escape death.

This gives us an important truth. God has always spared many of His godly ones when persecution occurs. He rescued the Israelites when they were in Egypt during the ten plagues. He promised to keep the believers in Philadelphia from the tribulation (Revelation 3:10). He has promised to keep us from the tribulation that is coming.

YAHWEH'S EXPLANATION OF THE SIGNS. At this point, we have been given four signs: the sign of the clay brick, the sign of the prophet's position, the sign of the polluted bread, and now the sign of the sword—sign of death.

Beginning with verses 5-17 we are given Yahweh's explanation of these four signs. There are two sections in these verses. First, verses 5-12 describe why Israel deserved punishment, and verses 13-17 explain why Yahweh had to punish them.

Why Israel Deserved Punishment. Verse 5 opens the first section. It says,

Thus says the Lord GOD, 'This is Jerusalem; I have set her at the center of the nations, with lands around her. Ezekiel 5:5 (NASB)

Yahweh said that Jerusalem was the center of the nations. That included all of the lands around her. The glowing words that Yahweh has used for Jerusalem is significant. For example, He refers to the city of Jerusalem as Zion and His holy mountain in Psalm 2:6. In Deuteronomy 7:6 Yahweh told the Israelites,

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of

all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. Deuteronomy 7:6 (NASB)

Israel was chosen by Yahweh to be His people and be His witnesses to the nations of the world. So, He placed them in the center of the world. In Zechariah 8:2-3, He revealed His passion for them,

I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her.” Zechariah 8:2a (NASB)

In the millennial kingdom, Zechariah 8:3 states,

... Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain. Zechariah 8:3 (NASB)

So, the city of Jerusalem is the center of the geographical world. In the millennial kingdom, it will also be the religious center according to Zechariah 14:9-21. That was God’s plan all along. Listen to these words from the apostle Paul,

I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. Romans 9:1-5 (NASB)

So, in Ezekiel 5:5 Yahweh reveals His plan for them. Then in verse 6, He reveals His disappointment in them. In verses 6-8, Yahweh reveals His disappointment with them, and why Israel deserves punishment. He said,

“But she has rebelled against My ordinances more wickedly than the nations and against My statutes more than the lands which surround her; for they have rejected My ordinances and

have not walked in My statutes. Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Because you have more turmoil than the nations which surround you and have not walked in My statutes, nor observed My ordinances, nor observed the ordinances of the nations which surround you,’ 8 therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I, even I, am against you, and I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations.” Ezekiel 5:6-8 (NASB)

Notice that Yahweh singled out one surprising spiritual fact about them. He said they were more wicked than the nations around them. That is very surprising. He said in verse 6 that they had “rebelled against My ordinances more wickedly than the nations.” Then in verse 7 He said, “you have more turmoil than the nations.” It is difficult to accept that the citizens in Jerusalem had acted more wickedly than those in surrounding nations. They did not even obey the laws of surrounding nations (v. 7). They were completely lawless. They were completely self-centered.

We see the same wicked behavior increasing in our own country. Many people are rejecting God and His laws. As a result, we hear some claim that they “follow the science” but they have rejected God’s definitions of male and female. Even science reveals there are only two sexes. They profess to be wise, but they are actually fools. Lawlessness is increasing. Sexual sins, perversions, pornography, and nudity is exploding like a hypersonic missile. That which is holy is now called wicked and that which is wicked is now called good. Lying and deception now flows like water from our politicians, businesses, acquaintances, and some we think are friends. Our law enforcement organizations are becoming corrupt. The very purpose of government according to Romans 13:1-7 is to suppress evil, but our leaders are becoming the criminals. Churches are abandoning the solid teaching of Scripture in order to please people, and also due to lazy pastors. Just forty to fifty years ago, most evangelical churches had Sunday services and mid-week Bible studies, and the faithful attended the services. But that is no longer true anymore. Family time and pleasure keep many people away from church. Other things are more important than God and knowing more about Him. I am glad that we do not know all the sins that the people of Jerusalem committed. But we will discover some of the worst later.

In Amos 3:2 Yahweh said this about Israel,

**You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth;
Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.
Amos 3:2 (NASB)**

So, Yahweh said, “I, even I, am against you, and I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations” (Amos 3:2). Yahweh would punish the people He chose. It is a shocking statement that He said, “I, even I, am against you.” But I would rather our God punish me than someone else. He will not punish me more than I deserve. He is just and righteous. He also loves me!

Verses 9-10 give us shocking news. Yahweh said,

**“And because of all your abominations, I will do among you what I have not done, and the like of which I will never do again. 10
‘Therefore, fathers will eat their sons among you, and sons will eat their fathers; for I will execute judgments on you and scatter all your remnant to every wind.’” Ezekiel 5:9-10 (NASB)**

Notice what Yahweh said. He has not taken credit for their sin, but He takes responsibility for their punishment. He said that He was going to punish them in a way that He never has before and will never do again. The punishment was going to be horrible. Then in verse 10, He said they would choose to eat their sons and their sons would eat them. Why? Because Yahweh was executing His judgments on them. Lamentations 4:10 describes what the Israelites actually did. It says that the women who were once considered compassionate would do horrible things to their own children.

**The hands of compassionate women
Boiled their own children;
They became food for them
Because of the destruction of the daughter of my people.
Lamentations 4:10 (NASB)**

Yahweh would execute punishment and they would eat their own children in reaction due to the famine. Do you remember the sign of the polluted bread, the sign of the famine? This is

the “horror” mentioned in Ezekiel 4:16.

In the next two verses, Yahweh declares that He is not influenced by pity and sorrow. Then He repeats the sign of the sword.

“‘So as I live,’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols and with all your abominations, therefore I will also withdraw, and My eye will have no pity and I will not spare. 12 One third of you will die by plague or be consumed by famine among you, one third will fall by the sword around you, and one third I will scatter to every wind, and I will unsheathe a sword behind them.’” Ezekiel 5:11-12 (NASB)

Notice that Yahweh said, “As I live.” That is, just as our eternal God lives, the following was going to occur. That comment should have scared them, but it did not. Then Yahweh gave them four judgments in verse 12 that are common in Scripture: plague or disease, famine, weapons of death, scattering of people, and being pursued. They would suffer sickness, be hungry, lose family members, friends, and flee from their homes and possessions. Finally, the enemy would chase after them.

So, we read in 2 Kings 25:18-21 and 2 Chronicles 36:17 that Yahweh,

... brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or infirm; He gave them all into his hand. 2 Chronicles 36:17 (NASB)

Why Yahweh Must Punish Them. Verse 13-17 reveals why Yahweh had to punish them. Three times in these five verses Yahweh says, “I have spoken.” He says it in verses 13, 15, and then 17.

The last section reminds me of when we disciplined our children. We always took time to explain to them why they were being disciplined. God just did that in Ezekiel 5:5-12. Yahweh explained the meaning of the four signs. Then sometimes we explained why we had to discipline our children. We often told

them that God had asked us to do that, and we wanted to be obedient to Him. That helps us to understand Ezekiel 5:13-17. Yahweh explained why He had to punish them. He did it because He hates sin and His wrath must be satisfied!

Verse 13 tells us,

“Thus My anger will be spent and I will satisfy My wrath on them, and I will be appeased; then they will know that I, the LORD, have spoken in My zeal when I have spent My wrath upon them.” Ezekiel 5:13 (NASB)

The opening statement is fearful. Yahweh said, “My anger will be spent and I will satisfy My wrath on them.” Because of their evil, Yahweh will do three things. First, His anger must cease or be finished. The Hebrew idiom means that Yahweh’s anger must achieve its planned goal. Second, He said that He must satisfy His wrath on them. The Hebrew word for wrath can also be translated as “fury.” He will pour out His fury on them. They are the target. Third, He will be appeased. The Hebrew word for “appeased means “to comfort.” These statements are frightening. The Israelites were the target of Yahweh’s anger and wrath. Only after they are devastated will Yahweh be comforted. He will be consoled only when He has punished evil according to His holy standard.

Finally, Yahweh said, “then they will know that I, the LORD, have spoken.” They did not believe Yahweh when He spoke through the prophets. They did not think Yahweh would do that. The false teachers were telling the people that Yahweh would not punish them. Today, we hear that God is love. Some believers have a false sense of grace. But Yahweh states, “then they will know that I, the LORD, have spoken.” That is, they did not believe Me!

Verses 14-15 say,

“Moreover, I will make you a desolation and a reproach among the nations which surround you, in the sight of all who pass by. 15 ‘So it will be a reproach, a reviling, a warning and an object of horror to the nations who surround you when I execute judgments against you in anger, wrath and raging rebukes. I, the LORD, have spoken.” Ezekiel 5:14-15 (NASB)

Now Yahweh adds that Jerusalem will be humiliated and mocked by other nations because of what will happen to them. Nations will be horrified by the destruction that will occur. Why will this happen? Yahweh clearly states that will occur because He executed judgment against them. Once again Yahweh claims credit. Then He declares, “I, the LORD, have spoken.”

Then in verses 16-17 Yahweh summarizes the four signs of the clay brick, the position of the prophet, the polluted bread and the sword. He said,

“When I send against them the deadly arrows of famine which were for the destruction of those whom I will send to destroy you, then I will also intensify the famine upon you and break the staff of bread. 17 Moreover, I will send on you famine and wild beasts, and they will bereave you of children; plague and bloodshed also will pass through you, and I will bring the sword on you. I, the LORD, have spoken.” Ezekiel 5:16-17 (NASB)

Notice again that Yahweh takes credit for the destruction that occurred. He said, “I will destroy you.” “I will also intensify the famine upon you and break the staff of bread.” “I will send on you famine and wild beasts.” “I will bring the sword on you.”

The message is then God’s “anger will be spent.” His wrath will descend upon them, and He “will be appeased.” Jerusalem will have been humiliated, and devastated for their rebellion, and unrepentant sin. They did not listen to the prophets. They did not listen to Ezekiel. Yahweh had warned Ezekiel that they would not listen (Ezekiel 3:6-7). So, Yahweh concludes with, “I, the LORD, have spoken.” That is, “I warned you.”

CONCLUSION. In the last study we learned five principles. Principle #1 is that God, Himself, punishes us for unrepentant sin. Principle #2 is that God is slow to punish us. Principle #3 is that unrepentant sin stores up punishment. Principle #4 is that God reveals His holiness when He punishes sin.

PRINCIPLE #5—GOD MUST SATISFY HIS WRATH AGAINST UNBELIEVER’S SIN. In this study, we have discovered a fifth principle. At some point our holy God must satisfy His wrath against sin. In verse 13 Yahweh said,

Thus My anger will be spent and I will satisfy My wrath on them,

and I will be appeased . . . Ezekiel 5:13a (NASB)

God is only appeased after His wrath is poured out upon unbelieving sinners. This is a serious and scary truth. Yes, God is slow to punish unbelievers for their sins, but at some point He must punish them for their sins. His holiness demands it. God cannot delay His anger forever.

PRINCIPLE #6—GOD FAITHFULLY DISCIPLINES SINNING BELIEVERS. The sixth principle is that God warns believers about sin in Scripture and by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. But He will eventually discipline believers if they do not stop sinning. Hebrews 12:7-9 tells us that God disciplines true believers. The purpose is to motivate us to stop sinning.

It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? Hebrews 12:7-9 (NASB)

PRINCIPLE #7—GOD FAITHFULLY WARNS AND THEN PUNISHES US FOR SIN. The seventh principle is that God warns us about sin, but He will proceed with His plan to punish us if He knows we will not repent. This principle is revealed in the fact that God sent Ezekiel to an unrepentant people. He became the watchman (Ezekiel 3:16-21) whenever God gave him a message to give the people. Yet, God told the prophet the people would not repent. Consequently, the announcement of punishment was scheduled to occur, and it did in 586 B.C. This principle is also revealed when God warns us about our sin and urges us to believe in Jesus Christ or we will perish. God is not eager to punish us for sin.

PRINCIPLE #8—WHEN GOD SPEAKS, BELIEVE HIM! The eighth and last principle is that when God speaks, we better listen. He is no fool. In the closing verses of our study, God stated, “I, the LORD, have spoken.” He reminded them that He had spoken. He had warned them, but they did not listen. They were responsible for their own punishment. So, we

have learned some important principles. When God speaks, we are wise if we believe Him. We must flee sin. We must pursue holiness. When we continue in sin, He will eventually punish us. But if we pursue holiness, He will reward us with blessing.