

Ezekiel 5:1-17—A Sword Against Jerusalem

Memory Verse

Ezekiel 36:26-27 NKJV

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Revision

Last week in Ezekiel chapter 4 we saw Ezekiel preach his first action sermon, where he portrayed the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. Because the people refused to repent (turn from their sins and turn to God), God had to judge them. Ezekiel described what it would be like living in the desperate times when the Babylonian army besieged the city of Jerusalem and they began to starve to death. Chapters 5 through 7 continue to describe God's judgement on the nation of Israel because of their hard hearts and wilful sin.

The Sword of God's Judgement

Ezekiel 5:1-17 NKJV

“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; then take scales to weigh and divide the hair. ² You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around it with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out a sword after them. ³ You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment. ⁴ Then take some of them again and throw them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will go out into all the house of Israel.

⁵ “Thus says the Lord God: ‘This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her. ⁶ She has rebelled against My judgments by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against My statutes more than the countries that are all around her; for they have refused My judgments, and they have not walked in My statutes.’ ⁷ Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Because you have multiplied disobedience more than the nations that are all around you, have not walked in My statutes nor kept My judgments, nor even done according to the judgments of the nations that are all around you’— ⁸ therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. ⁹ And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. ¹⁰ Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds.

¹¹ ‘Therefore, as I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity.

¹² One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.

¹³ ‘Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will cause My fury to rest upon them, and I will be avenged; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it in My zeal,

when I have spent My fury upon them. ¹⁴ Moreover I will make you a waste and a reproach among the nations that are all around you, in the sight of all who pass by.

¹⁵ 'So it shall be a reproach, a taunt, a lesson, and an astonishment to the nations that are all around you, when I execute judgments among you in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I, the Lord, have spoken. ¹⁶ When I send against them the terrible arrows of famine which shall be for destruction, which I will send to destroy you, I will increase the famine upon you and cut off your supply of bread. ¹⁷ So I will send against you famine and wild beasts, and they will bereave you. Pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I, the Lord, have spoken.' ”

The prophecy of the thirds illustrated by cutting Ezekiel's hair (v 1–4)

Ezekiel 5:1-4 NKJV

“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; then take scales to weigh and divide the hair. ² You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around it with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out a sword after them. ³ You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment. ⁴ Then take some of them again and throw them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will go out into all the house of Israel.

v 1 **Take a sharp sword, take it as a barber's razor:** We saw last week three prophetic demonstrations of coming judgement. Ezekiel 5 begins with a fourth—the cutting off of his hair with a very sharp sword. Can you imagine the people watching Ezekiel sharpening the sword, and then being amazed or even horrified as he used a proper sword, normally used in battle, to cut—or hack—all his hair and beard off. What a sight! Why a sword? Because this acted out prophecy concerned the judgement that the Babylonian army would bring upon Jerusalem.

Culturally, cutting off your hair was either a sign of mourning (see Jeremiah 48:7) or a sign of disgrace (see 2 Samuel 10:4-5), and was an especially significant and difficult thing for Ezekiel to do because he was a priest:

“Such shaving was forbidden to a priest like Ezekiel and ordinarily meant the loss of priestly status and position. The hair of the priest was a mark of his consecration to God's service (see Lev. 21:5; 19:27).” (Feinberg)

v 1 **Take scales to weigh and divide the hair:** God wanted Ezekiel to divide the hair into thirds, using a scale to make sure it was divided accurately.

v 2 **Burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city:** After Ezekiel had finished his “siege” against his picture of Jerusalem, lying on his side for 430 days, Ezekiel was to act out this next prophecy, which very powerfully contradicted the false promises of deliverance predicted by the many false prophets. This is what Ezekiel was asked to do with his hair:

- Burn one third **in the midst of the city** of Jerusalem.
- Strike one third **with the sword**.
- Scatter one third **in the wind**.

“Several commentators (such as Smith and Alexander) believe **the midst of the city** was actually the clay tablet Ezekiel made with the drawing of Jerusalem on it (Ezekiel 4:1).” (David Guzik) What this means is that either Ezekiel went to Jerusalem and played out this drama, or it was acted out in Babylon, with the city of Jerusalem represented by Ezekiel’s drawing of the besieged Jerusalem on the clay tablet. Either way, it would have become well known to the people.

v 3 **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:** The small number of hairs bound in Ezekiel’s garment spoke of the small remnant of the people that Nebuchadnezzar would leave behind in Israel, around Jerusalem. The fact that some would be thrown into the fire speaks of the suffering and misery that they would face there. This was fulfilled exactly in 2 Kings 25:22-26 and Jeremiah chapters 40-44.

Israel, created to be God’s light to the world (v 5)

Ezekiel 5:5 NKJV

“Thus says the Lord God: ‘This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her.

Jerusalem is the capital of the nation of Israel. God used Israel to make a name for Himself. Examples of this include: the exodus from Egypt, the conquests of Joshua as they defeated the people of the land of Canaan, and the mighty nation established by King David.

2 Samuel 7:23-24 NKJV

And who is like Your people, like Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make for Himself a name—and to do for Yourself great and awesome deeds for Your land—before Your people whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, the nations, and their gods? ²⁴ For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, Lord, have become their God.

Israel is also God’s chosen vessel to bring salvation to all the world through the promised Seed or Messiah. The Messiah was first promised in Genesis 3:15 (the Seed of the woman would bruise Satan’s head—a mortal wound), then in Genesis with the promises concerning the Seed or Messiah given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and finally in 2 Samuel 7 God promises that the promised Seed or Messiah would be one of King David’s descendants. ‘Salvation is of the Jews’ (John 4:22).

Also, Israel was God’s example to the nations: if they obeyed God then they would be blessed beyond measure, but if they disobeyed they would be severely punished. *Why? Because with great privilege comes great responsibility.* So, either way, whether Israel obeyed or disobeyed, the nations around would know that God was real and in control, because what He said always came to pass. Consider what Nebuzaradan, who was basically the top general in the Babylonian army, said to Jeremiah after the Babylonians had defeated Jerusalem and were taking most of the remaining people (the third who didn’t die from war and famine) captive back to Babylon.

Jeremiah 40:1-3 NKJV

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord after Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him bound in chains among all

who were carried away captive from Jerusalem and Judah, who were carried away captive to Babylon.

² And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him: "The Lord your God has pronounced this doom on this place. ³ Now the Lord has brought it, and has done just as He said. Because you people have sinned against the Lord, and not obeyed His voice, therefore this thing has come upon you.

Notice that this top general recognised that what his army did was actually God's doing and was God's plan—"Now the Lord has brought it, and has done just as He said. Because you people have sinned against the Lord, and not obeyed His voice, therefore this thing has come upon you." Why did he have this understanding? Because of the prophets. The prophets' message was heard not just in Jerusalem, but in all the nations and countries around them.

Jerusalem itself is a very important place because it was where God chose to redeem fallen mankind back to Himself. In Genesis 22, we see God using Abraham to provide a preview of coming attractions when God asked Abraham to go to Mount Moriah (now Jerusalem), and sacrifice his only son, whom he loved, Isaac. Of course, at the very last moment, God stopped Abraham from actually killing Isaac, and provided an alternative sacrifice, a ram. 2,000 years later, however, God provided Himself as the sacrifice. God would send His own Son, Jesus, whom He loved, but he wouldn't hold back the knife—Jesus as a man became the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29) when He allowed Himself to be crucified in our place.

"Jerusalem, the chosen city, was the spiritual centre of the earth and, indeed, of the universe, since Jesus Christ died there (Colossians 1:20)." (Wright)

Colossians 1:19-22 NLT paraphrase

For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, ²⁰ and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.

²¹ This includes you who were once far away from God. *You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions [sin].* ²² Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.

It is also through Israel that we have the Scriptures. Truly, the nation of Israel was blessed to be the people of God.

Romans 3:1-2, 9:4-5 NKJV

What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? ² Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God [Scriptures].

9:4 Who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; ⁵ of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

Again, with all this privilege, revelation, and blessing, comes great responsibility and accountability. God is, in Ezekiel chapters 2 through 7, showing just how great the negative consequences were for Israel because of their consistent rebellion against Him, and why they deserved them.

The promise of severe judgment against Jerusalem (v 6–10)

Ezekiel 5:6-10 NKJV

She has rebelled against My judgments by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against My statutes more than the countries that are all around her; for they have refused My judgments, and they have not walked in My statutes.⁷ Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Because you have multiplied disobedience more than the nations that are all around you, have not walked in My statutes nor kept My judgments, nor even done according to the judgments of the nations that are all around you'⁸—therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations.⁹ And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations.¹⁰ Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds.

v 6 **She has rebelled against My judgments by doing wickedness more than the nations:** It seems incredible that the city and nation that were most blessed by God became more evil and rebellious than even those wicked nations and countries around her. You would think that with all the goodness and blessings that God poured out on Israel that they would have honoured God and submitted to God. Why didn't they?

Application: This shows how sin can harden our hearts. The same thing can easily happen to us as believers if we allow sin to have a foothold in our lives as individuals, and also as a church. A Christian with a hard heart is capable of even greater degrees of sin than a non-believer, however they are much more responsible and accountable.

Hebrews 3:12-13 NLT paraphrase

Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God.¹³ You must warn each other every day, while it is still "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.

v 8 **Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst:** God had not given up on His people, and will never give up on His chosen people Israel (as is obvious today—He's brought them back into the Land as promised), but He would personally discipline them. The same is true for us in the Church age. If we sin, if we neglect our relationship with God, it will feel like God is against us as we grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) and invite God's loving discipline upon ourselves (Hebrews 12:1-13). God will indeed be against our sin, our rebellion, and our hard heartedness.

"Because of their great sin, God promised to *personally* bring judgment against them. Even though it would come largely through the instrument of the Babylonian army, it was *God's* judgment upon them." (David Guzik)

"It is an awful thing when those who have sinned against conspicuous privilege and opportunity come under the rod. Their punishment is infinitely heavier than that of such as have never known." (Meyer) *With greater knowledge come greater accountability.*

"Though the old world perished by water, and the judgment was greater in its extent, and Sodom was destroyed by fire, yet neither one or other was so lingering a death. These poor Jews were long dying, and felt themselves dying." (Poole)

“Israel, suffering for her sins under God’s righteous wrath, would be an object lesson to the nations. The heathen would be amazed because they had not seen a national deity so deal with a people who professed His worship.” (Feinberg) *God would be glorified.*

v 9 **Therefore fathers shall eat their sons:** God had promised this judgement in Leviticus and Deuteronomy (the Law) as a part of the physical blessings and curses for Israel—blessings if they obeyed and curses if they disobeyed. Those remaining in Jerusalem would be reduced to the most terrible suffering, even cannibalism.

Leviticus 26:29 NKJV

You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.

v 10 **And all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds:** Those rebels who survived wouldn’t be established and planted in Babylon like the ones who were taken captive in the two earlier exiles, but rather would be scattered everywhere and live a miserable life. Let’s read the passage from Deuteronomy where God through Moses predicted what would happen to the rebellious Israelites, even before they had even entered the promised land, around 800 years before this event happened.

Deuteronomy 28:49-68 NLT paraphrase

“The Lord will bring a distant nation against you from the end of the earth, and it will swoop down on you like a vulture. It is a nation whose language you do not understand, ⁵⁰ a fierce and heartless nation that shows no respect for the old and no pity for the young. ⁵¹ Its armies will devour your livestock and crops, and you will be destroyed. They will leave you no grain, new wine, olive oil, calves, or lambs, and you will starve to death. ⁵² They will attack your cities until all the fortified walls in your land—the walls you trusted to protect you—are knocked down. They will attack all the towns in the land the Lord your God has given you.

⁵³ “The siege and terrible distress of the enemy’s attack will be so severe that you will eat the flesh of your own sons and daughters, whom the Lord your God has given you.

⁵⁴ The most tenderhearted man among you will have no compassion for his own brother, his beloved wife, and his surviving children. ⁵⁵ He will refuse to share with them the flesh he is devouring—the flesh of one of his own children—because he has nothing else to eat during the siege and terrible distress that your enemy will inflict on all your towns. ⁵⁶ The most tender and delicate woman among you—so delicate she would not so much as touch the ground with her foot—will be selfish toward the husband she loves and toward her own son or daughter. ⁵⁷ She will hide from them the afterbirth and the new baby she has borne, so that she herself can secretly eat them. She will have nothing else to eat during the siege and terrible distress that your enemy will inflict on all your towns.

⁵⁸ *“If you refuse to obey all the words of instruction that are written in this book, and if you do not fear the glorious and awesome name of the Lord your God, ⁵⁹ then the Lord will overwhelm you and your children with indescribable plagues.* These plagues will be intense and without relief, making you miserable and unbearably sick. ⁶⁰ He will afflict you with all the diseases of Egypt that you feared so much, and you will have no relief.

⁶¹ The Lord will afflict you with every sickness and plague there is, even those not mentioned in this Book of Instruction, until you are destroyed. ⁶² Though you become as numerous as the stars in the sky, few of you will be left [never complete destruction, there would always be a remnant] because you would not listen to the Lord your God.

⁶³ “Just as the Lord has found great pleasure in causing you to prosper and multiply, the Lord will find pleasure in destroying you [in the sense that justice would be served]. You will be torn from the land you are about to enter and occupy. ⁶⁴ For the Lord will scatter

you among all the nations from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship foreign gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, gods made of wood and stone! ⁶⁵ *There among those nations you will find no peace or place to rest. And the Lord will cause your heart to tremble, your eyesight to fail, and your soul to despair.* ⁶⁶ Your life will constantly hang in the balance. You will live night and day in fear, unsure if you will survive. ⁶⁷ In the morning you will say, ‘If only it were night!’ And in the evening you will say, ‘If only it were morning!’ For you will be terrified by the awful horrors you see around you. ⁶⁸ Then the Lord will send you back to Egypt in ships, to a destination I promised you would never see again. There you will offer to sell yourselves to your enemies as slaves, but no one will buy you.”

Prophecy fulfilled: The last verse we just read, Deuteronomy 28:68, was not fulfilled with the Babylonian invasion, but was exactly fulfilled about 600 years later on, in 70 A.D., when the Romans Destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. David Guzik explains how it happened:

*In this siege of Jerusalem hunger became so great that many tried to escape the walls and forage for food. Five hundred or more were captured and crucified daily. “The soldiers out of rage and hatred amused themselves by nailing their prisoners in different postures; and so great was their numbers, that space could not be found for the crosses nor crosses for the bodies.” (Josephus: War 5.451) More than 600,000 died from starvation, and their dead bodies were dumped over the walls of the city. In total more than a million died and 97,000 were captured, with most of the captives being shipped as slaves to Egypt. The promise of Deuteronomy 28:68 was tragically fulfilled: **Then the Lord will send you back to Egypt in ships, to a destination I promised you would never see again. There you will offer to sell yourselves to your enemies as slaves, but no one will buy you.** This happened as too many Jewish slaves glutted the Egyptian slave market, and no one could buy all the available slaves.*

Isn't it amazing how accurate prophecy is! The destruction of Jerusalem is also a good example of a prediction having multiple fulfillments, in this case the dual fulfillment of the Jews experiencing severe and prolonged famine because of their rebellion against God.

God explains why He is judging Jerusalem—Spiritual Adultery

Ezekiel 5:11-12 NKJV

‘Therefore, as I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity. ¹² One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.

v 11 **Therefore, as I live:** In contrast to the dead idols that the Jews were actually worshipping (they only gave lip service to God), and the idols or gods of the other nations, our God is a living God. Our God creates, speaks, knows, loves, and acts.

v 11 **Because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things:** How had Israel sinned worse than the pagan nations? Here is one example which highlights the depth of their rebellion against God—they defiled God's own temple.

Later on we'll find out exactly what they did—it was terrible—there were even foreign gods or idols inside the temple and around the temple.

Why was this such an insult to God? *It's spiritual adultery.* The people belonged to God, and God lavished His love on them, but they refused to love Him. Instead they were unfaithful, choosing other lovers, other gods or idols in place of God (which are really demons, and therefore demon worship—Leviticus 17:7). Let's put this into perspective. Imagine coming home to find your wife or husband sleeping with someone else in your own bed. Imagine the rage and indignation you would feel—the betrayal, the rightful jealousy, the broken trust, the rejection, the anger. But God had been putting up with this for centuries. He is so patient. Keep in mind God's heart in all this:

2 Peter 3:9 NLT paraphrase

The Lord isn't really being slow about His promise, as some people think. No, He is being patient for your sake. ***He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.***

In His great mercy God had delayed for a long time this terrible judgement, giving them more and more time to repent, but it needed to come. Why? Because the people's hearts were becoming harder and harder towards God. God had to discipline them, otherwise, if left to their own devices and choices, their sin would have destroyed them. Judging them with an evil pagan nation was the only thing left for God to do. It was an act of love and mercy. Remember that God had previously warned them many times; He had disciplined them with many smaller disciplines like drought, failed crops, locusts, diseases etc, but they never learned their lesson. So when they wouldn't listen to God, God used the world to discipline His own people. How shameful and embarrassing for the people of God to be judged or disciplined by the ones that they were meant to be reaching out to with God's message of hope and salvation.

v 11 **Therefore I will also diminish you:** How? By the action sermon given in 5:2 and repeated here in verse 12:

- One third **shall die of the pestilence** (disease) and **famine**.
- One third shall be killed **by the sword all around**.
- One third shall be scattered **to all the winds**, with a **sword** following them.

Application: The same is true for believers individually and as a church corporately. If we refuse to repent of our sins as God disciplines us directly—as the Holy Spirit brings conviction to our hearts through the Word of God and makes us uncomfortable—then He will allow us to be shamed in the eyes of the world. Like God did with Israel, He will allow the world to judge us, and we as believers will be held in contempt by the very unbelievers we were meant to be ambassadors of God to. What a terrible example—what shame and disgrace we can bring upon ourselves.

But remember, there is always mercy and forgiveness waiting for when we do repent. Remember King David with Bathsheba and Sampson with Delilah. They were both disgraced in the eyes of the world, but both were still used by God again (although they both suffered the practical consequences of their sin). In the same way, Israel will be forgiven and restored and has a glorious future ahead of them, partly during the tribulation (the 144,000 Jewish evangelists), and as a whole nation during the Millennium.

God's anger will be spent (v 13)

Ezekiel 5:13 NKJV

'Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will cause My fury to rest upon them, and I will be avenged; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it in My zeal, when I have spent My fury upon them.'

v 13 **In my zeal:** "The Hebrew word *gina* suggests 'ardour', 'passionate feeling' (the root meaning is 'to grow purple in the face'), and therefore covers both zeal and jealousy, as well as resentment and indignation at an insult done to the honour of oneself or of another." (Taylor) It's important to understand that God really hates sin. It makes Him very angry.

Application: *This helps us to understand why Jesus suffering on the cross was so severe—the wrath of God, God's anger against sin, was poured out on Jesus. The good news is that because the cup of God's wrath was fully poured out on Jesus (see Mark 14:36), we are free from God's judgement and wrath if we repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:15). This means that we must turn from our sin and trust that Jesus' death on the cross was the full payment for the sins of all mankind (1 John 2:2).*

Psalm 7:11 NKJV

God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

v 13 **They shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it:** God had warned the people so many times that they would know that the discipline, when it finally happened, was from God. Also, the nations would also know that what happened to Israel was God's plan, because the prophets foretold everything that happened.

v 13 **Thus shall My anger be spent:** We saw before that God's righteous anger had been building up for many years, and that in mercy He had delayed judgement. But the time for judgement had come. However, the discipline would one day be over, and relationship restored. Soon God's anger will be turned away and they would experience God's comfort.

Isaiah 12:1 NKJV

And in that day you will say: "O Lord, I will praise You;
Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.

Application: God's discipline is temporary, so don't give up

We see here that when God disciplines a believer, there will be a time when the discipline is complete or finished. In other words, the divine discipline we experience is painful, but temporary. If we endure, we will experience the fruit of righteousness.

Hebrews 12:11 AMP

For the time being no discipline brings joy, but seems grievous and painful; but afterwards it yields a peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it [***a harvest of fruit which consists in righteousness—in conformity to God's will in purpose, thought, and action, resulting in right living and right standing with God***].

The great destruction resulting from God's judgment (14–17)

Ezekiel 5:14-17 NKJV

Moreover I will make you a waste and a reproach among the nations that are all around you, in the sight of all who pass by.

¹⁵ 'So it shall be a reproach, a taunt, a lesson, and an astonishment to the nations that are all around you, when I execute judgments among you in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I, the Lord, have spoken. ¹⁶ When I send against them the terrible arrows of famine which shall be for destruction, which I will send to destroy you, I will increase the famine upon you and cut off your supply of bread. ¹⁷ So I will send against you famine and wild beasts [wild animals], and they will bereave you. Pestilence [disease, bubonic plague] and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I, the Lord, have spoken.' "

Here we have a reminder of the different forms of judgement that God would send to discipline the nation of Israel.

v 15 **So it shall be a reproach, a taunt, a lesson, and an astonishment to the nations:** As we spoke of earlier, God would use Israel to make Himself known to the nations—either by incredible blessings if they obeyed, or disastrous curses if they disobeyed. Either way, the nations would know that what happened to them could only have been caused by God.

v 16 **Terrible arrows:** "Famine and pestilence are represented as *poisoned arrows*, inflicting death wherever they *wound*." (Clarke)

v 15, 17 **I, the Lord, have spoken... I, the Lord, have spoken:** "In 593 B.C. Ezekiel pronounced this word of judgment; in 586 his prophetic status was confirmed." (Block)

Ezekiel had to wait seven years for his status as God's prophet to be confirmed. In the meantime the false prophets were having a hay-day deceiving and being deceived. However, once the events happened, the people knew that God was in control, and they would know who to believe.

Application: Like Ezekiel, we must warn people of coming Judgement

2 Peter 3:3-7 NLT paraphrase

Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. ⁴ They will say, "What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created."

⁵ They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water.

⁶ Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. ⁷ And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed.

Even if people don't believe us now, in the Tribulation they will know that what we shared from the Bible was true, that the Bible really is a true record of both past and future events. Even if people don't believe, God is glorified as we share with others the news of the coming judgement coming soon to this sinful and rebellious world. Be faithful to study the Word of God so you can effectively share the truth of future events, so that people will know that God is truly on the throne in Heaven and is in control.