

## Ezekiel 3:22–5:17 • “In the Midst of the Nations”

- Background In Ch 3:16-21, God appointed Ezekiel to be a “watchman” and charged him with warning the house of Israel re coming judgment. In this next section, Ezekiel begins to fulfill his calling according to God’s direction.
- 3v22 “Plain” could also mean “valley” (cf Ez 37 / valley of dry bones?)
- 3v23-24a Same presence of God as Ch 1; same response (face down).  
But again the Holy Spirit pulls Ezekiel to his feet to listen.
- 3v24b-27 God gives Ezekiel three instructions: (1) stay in your house; (2) let yourself be bound (and bedridden); (3) be silent except as I give you words to speak (cf Moses @ Numbers 20).  
From Ez 24 & 33 we know Ezekiel continues under these restrictions 6-18 mos until after the fall of Jerusalem (6½ - 7½ years total!)
- 4v1-3 Ch 4 & 5 = 4 symbolic acts performed by Ezekiel under God’s direction  
First is construction of a model of Jerusalem under siege.
- 4v4-8 Second is Ezekiel lying on his sides to prophesy time of iniquity.  
The math is challenging: 390 yrs for Israel; 40 yrs for Judah?  
Doesn’t seem to fit anything working backwards; working forwards perhaps takes us from time of Ezekiel’s captivity (597bc) or the fall of Jerusalem (586bc) to Maccabean era –restoration of self-government?
- 4v9-13 Third symbolic act: Ezekiel goes on restricted rations. Note: mixing different grains in bread is not the point (nor against Levitical law).  
Point is starvation is part of judgment predicted in Lev 26:26.
- 4v14-17 Ez protests cooking over human dung (may or may not be forbidden).  
God relents (mercy) but the point doesn’t change. And again, what Ezekiel is pointing to what was long ago predicted (Leviticus 26:39).
- 5v1-4 Fourth object lesson: Ezekiel instructed to cut his hair with sword.  
(Sword to drive home this is picture of judgment at hands of army)  
Again a fulfillment of ancient prophecy (Leviticus 26:33-40).  
Weighing out hair (weighing = judgment) into thirds — those who die when Jerusalem falls, those who die in battle, and those who are dragged into exile (where many will still die).

*Not obvious but God likely intends for Ezekiel to carry out this demonstration on the model he made in Ch 4. Otherwise it’s not a warning but only a commentary after the fact.*

5v1-4 Ezekiel instructed to keep a few strands of hair back from the portion he scatters to the wind — picture of faithful remnant that will return to the land on fire for the Lord. (From Ezra and Nehemiah we know only a small percentage of those exiled actually return).

5v5 God clarifying the city pictured in Ezekiel's model is Jerusalem (not Babylon as some probably hoped) — “in the midst of nations” ie geographically central to major empires of biblical times, but even moreso central to God's plan of redemption for ALL nations.

5v6-12 Symbolism of four object lessons explained; note God speaking in future tense which supports the idea that all four acts are completed BEFORE the fall of Jerusalem.

5v13-17 Judgment is coming: it is well-deserved and will be well-executed. Note different tone than Jeremiah: no hope of repentance here.

APPLICATION: We are Jerusalem (v5). See 1 Peter 2:4–10 ☞ during this age of grace the church has inherited Israel's mission to declare God's praise and to proclaim to the world the way of salvation.

While we do not need to fear judgment (Jesus bore ALL our judgment on the cross), these verses are an important reminder of how important our ministry is to God.

We are here to make Him name famous, to make His love obvious, and to help the world see Him as He is — altogether glorious.