

The Weight and Woe of Sin

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Preacher: William Philip

[0 : 0 0] And so we're going to turn now to our Bible reading for this evening. Willie Philip, our senior minister, is going to be preaching to us shortly. And he's going to be preaching once again from the prophet Ezekiel.

So do open your Bibles, or if you don't have one, grab a visitor's Bible. They're red Bibles spread around at the front, the sides, and the back. And do turn up and read along with us.

We're going to read now chapter 8 and chapter 9 of Ezekiel. And I'd encourage you during the offering as well to read chapter 10.

That will be a help to you as we turn to the sermon later on. But now we read Ezekiel chapter 8, beginning at verse 1, and we'll read through to the end of chapter 9.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me, the hand of the Lord God fell upon me there.

[1 : 07] then I looked and behold a form that had the appearance of a man below what appeared to be his waist was fire and above his waist was something like the appearance of brightness like gleaming metal he put out the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my head and the spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north where was the seat of the image of jealousy which provokes to jealousy and behold the glory of the of the God of Israel was there like the vision that I saw in the valley and then he said to me son of man lift up your eyes now toward the north so I lifted my eyes up towards the north and behold north of the altar gate in the entrance was this image of jealousy and he said to me son of man do you see what they are doing the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here to drive me from my sanctuary but you will see still greater abominations and he brought me to the entrance of the court and when I looked behold there was a hole in the wall then he said to me son of man dig in the wall so I dug in the wall and behold there was an entrance and he said to me go in and see the vile abominations that they are committing here so I went in and saw and there engraved on the wall all around was every form of creeping things and loaths and beasts and all the idols of the house of Israel and before them stood 70 men of the elders of the house of Israel with jazaniah the son of shaphan standing among them each had his censer in his hand and the smoke of the cloud of incense went up then he said to me son of man have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark each in his room of pictures for they say the lord does not see us the lord has forsaken the land he said also to me you will see still greater abominations that they commit then he brought me to the entrance of the north gates of the house of the lord and behold there sat women weeping for tamis then he said to me have you seen this so who's son of man you will see still greater abominations than these and he brought me into the inner court of the house of the lord and behold at the entrance of the temple of the lord between the porch and the altar were about 25 men with their backs to the temple of the lord and their faces toward the east worshipping the sun toward the east then he said to me have you seen this so son of man is it too light a thing for the house of judah to commit the abominations that they commit here that they should fill the land with violence provoke me further to still further to anger behold they put the branch to their news therefore i will act in wrath my eye will not spare nor will i have pity and though they cry in my ears with a loud voice i will not hear them then he cried in my ears the loud voice saying bring near the executioners of the city each with his destroying weapon in his hand and behold six men came from the direction of the upper gate which faces north each with his weapon for slaughter in his hand and with them was a man

clothed in linen with a writing case at his waist and they went in and stood beside the bronze altar now the glory of the lord of israel had gone up from the cherub in which it rested to the threshold of the house and he called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing case at his waist and the lord said to him pass through the city through jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it and to the others he said in my hearing pass through the city after him and strike your eyes shall not spare and you shall show no pity kill old men outright young men and maidens little children and women but touch no one on whom is the mark and begin at my sanctuary so they began with the elders who were before the house then he said to them defile the house and fill the courts with the slain go out so they went out and struck in the city and while they were striking and i was left alone i fell upon my face and cried ah lord god will you destroy all the remnant of israel and the outpouring of your wrath on jerusalem then he said to me the guilt of the house of israel and judah is exceedingly great the land is full of blood and the city full of injustice for they say the lord has forsaken the land the lord does not see as for me my eye will not spare nor will i have pity i will bring their deeds upon their heads and behold the man clothed in linen with the writing case at his waist brought back word saying i have done as you commanded me amen this is god's word and we'll return to it shortly well do uh turn with me if you would to ezeiel uh chapter 8 where we began our reading this evening i want to begin with a question why do we insist that at the very heart of our christian faith is a doctrine so extraordinary so shocking that it is a huge stumbling block to so many people who would call themselves monotheists worshiping one god alone muslims jewish people jewish people today joe was witnesses mormons many others as well the doctrine of the deity of jesus christ in whom the the one true living god became fully man why must god become man well that's the question and the title of one of the most famous books of christian theology cur deus homo written by anselm bishop of archbishop of canterbury in the 11th century that was an age when archbishops were still concerned with god and gospel issues not just green and gay issues and he wrote this marvelous book and in that book he gave the answer to that question it's the resounding answer that the bible gives so clearly why must god become man well because only a god man could ever atone for human sin and evil the incarnation can't be explained only by the need for atonement the whole reason for the manger as a cradle for the son of god is that he might become a mediator on the cross for the sins of men

now many people today find that hard to understand if god is love surely god can just forgive sins out of love alone why the need for justice for punishment for sin or if you just think even of some of the terrible things that we've seen in the world in very recent days and think how loving it really could be to pretend that these things are just trivial to brush aside horrific evil as if really it was of no consequence but these questions aren't new and in that book *Cur Deus Homo* Anselm delivers uh his answer and he answers his questioner who is who is asking exactly that sort of question why why does god have to become man why can't he just forgive and he gives in his answer perhaps one of the most famous lines in the book where he says that to even think like that means he says that you have not yet considered the greatness of the weight of sin and that is the reason that we need a savior so great that only the overwhelming weight of the glory of god become man can't possibly overcome the weight and the woe of human sin our late queen in one of her christmas messages said so truly that god sent into the world neither a philosopher nor a general important as they are but a savior with power power to forgive and matthew chapter one tells us that the one to be born would be emmanuel god with us called jesus yeshua god saves because he will save his people from their sins but you see we begin to understand the real cost of forgiveness forgiveness that required god himself to become man and the sheer weight and the wonder of that true gospel of saving forgiveness we begin to understand that only when we begin to grasp the sheer weight and the woe of human sin and evil and sin and evil in this world and in our own hearts and paul christ's apostle tells us that all scripture is written for us to make us wise for salvation through faith in christ jesus and you see it's chapters like these ones ezekiel 8 to 10 that are here to teach us to wake us up to the real weight and the woe of our sin because here we have in in vivid technicolor god's exposure of sin and evil and his execution on sin and evil and his inevitable exit from the presence of sin and evil and it begins it begins with a devastating exposure at the very heart of the worshiping church look first at chapter 8 which shows us the exposure of sin and evil the glory of god has been defied by man even at the very heart of god's own house his temple and what's exposed here is the complete pollution of worship verse 1 very carefully dates these events it's about 14 months after ezekiel's original vision and so these elders of israel who are seeking him have seen relentless dramatizations for a long long time and perhaps they're just beginning to see that this man does actually speak from god however reluctant they are

and no doubt they come hoping for some more positive word but their hearts were hardened god himself says that when they come again in chapter 14 verse 1 and in chapter 20 verse 1 and here they're going to get a message that they really do not want to hear and they will struggle to believe chapters 8 right through to chapter 11 is a single unit the first paragraph of chapter 8 here the last paragraph of chapter 11 are like brackets they describe the glory of god but whereas chapter 8 verse 4 here begins by stating the glory of the god of israel was there that is in the temple in jerusalem as these chapters progress that glory is moving and is moving steadily away from the heart of the temple chapter 10 ends with the glory moving out completely from the temple and then chapter 11 moving out completely from the city into the hills beyond and what we're seeing is

Ichabod all over again do you remember the name that was given in terrible grief by the dying mother to her child in 1st Samuel 4 when the ark had left the middle of god's people and gone away and she called her child Ichabod because the glory has departed from Israel well that's the message in these chapters except it's far far more terrible because what he is exiting is the magnificence of Solomon's temple and the wonder of David's city and the four scenes that unfold here in Ezekiel's vision in chapter 8 show why it's happening this terrible judgment is more than justified by the sheer scale of the defiant desecration right at the heart of the temple itself and he's shown just how bad it is bit by bit as it gets worse and worse and worse so that he can pass on that message to others so as he sits there among these men verse 2 he again sees this vision of God that he saw at first the figure with a form of human appearance surrounded by brightness and fire and the Lord

[15 : 26] God himself by his hand lifts him up verse 3 by his hairs and transports him as it were so he can see things now as God sees behind the sham and the pretense of men to see the reality of what is actually going on and what he sees is shocking it is the complete pollution of worship a terrible expose of sin and evil the very first thing he sees in verse 3 is this provocative image of jealousy right in the face verse 4 of the glory of the God of Israel and so his terrible tour begins and it's as though he starts off thinking he's going to have a wonderful tour of a historic building like a cathedral but immediately discovers no he's actually in the chamber of horrors well the tour begins in verses 5 and 6 with the first abomination this image of jealousy sat defilently and obtrusively in the north gate we're told that was the gate that the king would enter into the temple from because his palace was just to the north of the temple and north too was the direction that Jeremiah the prophet had warned Judah that they would be invaded from in Jeremiah chapter 1 but here already is a spiritual invasion of God's house with this image almost certainly an image of

Asherah the mother of Baal the queen of heaven as she was called that had been erected in the temple by Manasseh one of the worst kings of Judah but it was later destroyed under Josiah and his reforms but it seems that it's been restored again probably by King Zedekiah and this was a pagan fertility goddess and so her worship involved all kinds of sexual prostitution and perversion and Ezekiel's shown that in verse 6 the abominations that the people were engaged in to drive God out of his own sanctuary and not only that it's likely that this queen of heaven was seen as a mediator of proper worship to God there's nothing new under the sun is there many Roman Catholic churches of the world today the mariolatry is such that the most imposing figure on display that you will see is a giant statue of the queen of heaven the mediator of prayers holding the helpless infant baby Jesus in her arms if you're a visitor from Mars entering many of these churches you would immediately assume wouldn't you this is the temple of a goddess and in many churches also today you'll find if not flags and banners defiantly parading sexual perversity then at least attitudes on a very warm embrace of such ideologies which provoke the jealous zeal of God for his true holiness abominations of these things

I don't think this is ancient history Paul addresses exactly this kind of thing doesn't he to the Christian church in the New Testament read 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and chapter 6 he calls out sexual immorality in the church and he says it's a desecration of God's temple just like Ezekiel does and he says just like Ezekiel flee from idolatry because these things Paul says are sins against your body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God and he goes on later in 1 Corinthians 10 again to say flee from idolatry and he again reminds us that these things just like Ezekiel 8 are written for us as warnings for the church today but there's worse to come the Lord says to Ezekiel and scene 2 in verses 7 to 13 reveals the going on behind these closed doors in an inner room inside the temple and Ezekiel enters this through a secret door in a hole in the wall and here he is aghast to see a room plastered with vile abominations loathsome reptile images all the idols of Israel's history by the way the word for idol used there and often through Ezekiel is a term that means pieces of excrement it's translated as dung in Job 20 verse 7 they are filthy loathsome things and they include probably in particular the serpent gods of Egypt and it seems here that the totality of the elders of Israel are worshipping them together secretly the 70 elders recalls the 70 elders who went up to Sinai with Moses but here they are whoring back to Egypt it's shocking as is the detail apparently in verse 11 there about

Jezaniah the son of Shaphan Shaphan was a very devout man he was involved with Josiah in recovering the book of the law in the temple three of his sons we know were loyal allies of the prophet Jeremiah but here even one of that godly family is here engaged in the worst kind of idolatry and Ezekiel is so shocked he blurts out his name even Jezaniah but there's more here actually than just idolatry because it's politics to worship Egyptian gods is to invoke the Egyptian armies and that's why they're doing this they're seeking help against Babylon not from the lord their savior but from Egypt their frequent enemy but again that's just so true to life isn't it that's what happens my enemy's enemy is my friend not so often the attitude isn't it of nations and leaders today but what a terrible mess it often turns out to be think of how the United States and the west armed and promoted the Taliban to get at the Russians in Afghanistan and then reaped the whirlwind as their own weapons were turned against them with the evolution of ISIS and so on or think about the terrible truth that we're now hearing that it seems that Israel armed and funded

Hamas as a way to harm the PLO and its successes politically well what a whirlwind has been reaped from that and these leaders in Judah then you see were deep and intrigued just like today and they were just like today covering it with propaganda in public verse 10 the message was well oh God's on our side they would be telling everybody God is coming to help us but actually in private the truth is verse 12 they knew the game was up God has forsaken the land so our only hope is to do a secret deal with Egypt we've got to do things just like the rest of the world doing it their way it's so reminiscent isn't it of exactly what leaders of national denominations say so often in public I was reading the spin about the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland this year same with the General Synod of the Church of England they have to address the questions of plummeting membership and plummeting finances and what they say is oh we're leaner we're fitter we're finding exciting new ways of doing church but behind closed doors in rooms that are plastered with business plans and spreadsheets and the rest they know that God has departed from them and they're sitting there planning mass closures and ministry reductions and asset stripping doing as the world does anything except what

[22 : 57] God says which is to confess your sin and repent and return to the true gospel and that's what's going on here but verse 13 there's still greater abominations to confront and verses 14 and 15 describe another idolatrous cult worshipping right in the temple not just the men this time but now it's the women weeping for Tammuz a long dead Sumerian king who was loved particularly by women probably linked to the Greek cult of the beautiful Adonis particularly attractive fertility cult for women therefore and one that was very very big in Babylon culture and yet here's Ezekiel among the exiles in Babylon weeping by the rivers of Babylon as they remember Zion and the temple and the place of God and what did he see right at the very heart of the temple of God in Jerusalem is Babylonian idolatry and filth but there's worse and the crowning

Nadir is seen in verse 16 right in the inner court where only the priests could serve Ezekiel sees 25 of them probably all the serving priests and instead of leading worship of the Lord they've got their backs to the temple of God and they're bowing in worship to the son something absolutely and explicitly forbidden repeatedly in the law of God look at Deuteronomy 4 for example but here is the united clergy of the church of God prostrate before the sun God the most powerful God of the culture of the day in Babylon Babylon the very city that epitomizes opposition to Zion opposition to the city of God right the way through the whole Bible from the Tower of Babel to the book of Revelation 18 and the Lord the Lord the Lord shocked Ezekiel to the very core imagine soldiers in the allied armies fighting against

Hitler and the Nazis in World War II enduring terrible suffering for the sake of those people back home and then they see footage of film from back home and they see their own family in their own homes putting up swastika flags and turning on the radio and listening to Hitler and doing Heil Hitler salutes that's what this is like and Paul says the apostle these things are written for us in the Christian church as warnings for us not to be engulfed by the most powerful gods of the culture of the day all around us and yet so often the church of Jesus Christ today is engulfed by these very things and the clergy so often are the ringleaders of it shouldn't we be shocked at the at the pagan cult of earth worship that's so dominant around us in society today and is being so readily embraced by the church I remember being shocked recently by seeing the massive globe

Gaia that dominated one of the English cathedrals for a time worship of the creation rather than the creator worshiping Gaia not God or embracing our peculiarly British national savior God the NHS cult with flags draping over altars and public displays of worship or the even more blasphemous cult of the global vaccine savior which all must buy down in worship and anybody who dares to blaspheme that has to be censored and cancelled and beaten into submission and of course there's the ongoing ubiquitous religion in our culture isn't there of pride whose flags and banners adorn so many places of supposed Christian worship desperate to curry favor with the prevailing worship of the culture all around us do you think these things are so very different in the professing church today compared to what we're reading here about

Ezekiel's day in the temple and in our modern Christian hearts today because we all have to examine ourselves don't we do we really think like these men in verse 12 thought that God doesn't see us he doesn't see what we do in the dark in the dark of our own rooms in our own hearts it's we who are blind to reality isn't it like our idols which are blind and dumb but God sees everything do you remember all those eyes around all the wheels around the throne of God seeing everything in the whole earth his eyes keep watch on the nations says psalm 66 verse 7 let not the rebellious exalt themselves and psalm 11 reminds us that God's eyes are especially focused where on his temple and we are that temple now says the apostle Paul the church and every

[28 : 13] Christian what does he see with those eyes who sees all even our innermost secrets well what he saw here was utterly defiant pollution of worship which had utterly corrupted the whole of society verse 17 filling the land with violence Hamas is the Hebrew word that's vividly striking today isn't it it's what filled society before the flood in Genesis 6 verse 11 and again Psalm 11 says God hates those who love that that's why his vision of the new creation at the end of Isaiah 60 it promises a world where violence Hamas will be no more but here verse 17 the whole of society is poking a branch right under God's nose the footnote reading there is probably right they're thumbing their noses at

God they're doing their evil right under his nose and therefore says verse 18 he will act in wrath his judgment will not be turned away it's too late for pleading I will not hear them and Paul says these things are written for us unless we somehow think that the Christian church is immune although become utterly pluralistic and full of all kinds of different idolatry the New Testament message is very very clear don't be mistaken we have received so much more of God's revelation better promises says Hebrews greater knowledge of God and so we bear far more responsibility not less much less will we escape if we reject him who warns us from heaven

Hebrews 12 verse 25 Jesus says to his churches in Revelation 2 and 3 I will come and war against you if you do not repent if you do not wake up I will come like a thief friends Ezekiel is a wake up call to the Christian church today it's like a blaring alarm clock isn't it waking us out of sleep pollution of worship when the glory of God is defiled by man especially when that is at the heart of his own household then he will act there comes a time when his ears closed to the cry of remorse and his hand will act and that is what we see in chapter 9 the execution upon sin and evil the glory of

God will be declared by God himself beginning at the very heart of his own house and what we see here is a clinical punishment of wickedness chapter 9 is full of apocalyptic language it reads like parts of revelation or Daniel so Ezekiel foresees this coming destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon's armies but he sees it clearly as being above all the heavenly judgment of God that's being executed verse 1 bring near the executioners cries the Lord himself Babylonian swords that are going to come but they are the bearers of God's sword of justice and in verse 2 you see the angelic guardians of the city God now makes them executioners God has become his own city's enemy but notice verse 3 because before they start

God's glory has already moved to the threshold to the temple door God is on the way out see the word of God has been despised and so the presence of God is departing and with his presence goes his protection disaster comes because God's protective hand is being lifted that's something we really need to understand so very clearly as we look at our world you see the horror and the evil in this world will be far worse than it is but for the restraining hand of God's mercy but where God's word has been known where it's been given but where it's been relentlessly defied and rejected the terrifying thing is that there come times in history when God's presence will move away and where he's scorned and where he's silenced he'll become silent and he'll become distant giving people up as Paul's words to their debased minds and hearts to their dishonorable passions and the result of that is always always calamitous as it was here

[33 : 34] God departs verse three but not silently he will nevertheless declare his own glory and he'll defend it in both just judgment and also in believing hope God's glory is declared here in just judgment both in protecting repentant saints and in punishing unrepentant sinners verse four speaks of God's command to the seventh man you see clothed in linen to go through the city to mark out the foreheads of those who sigh and groan at the wickedness around them not just those who disapprove but those who sigh and cry in prayer the authorized version preserves the alliteration of the Hebrew not just me that likes alliteration the Hebrew text has it too God doesn't think much of theoretical or formal disapproval but he does take very seriously those who are concerned and weep before his throne of grace as one writer puts it

God's judgments are just like with Sodom he seeks out even ten righteous men in Jeremiah chapter five we're told he couldn't even find one righteous man in Jerusalem but perhaps that first siege and the shock of it and the first exile did bring some people to repentance and here there'll be those who are protected I don't think it means that no godly people were killed in the carnage and the right that came but it does surely mean that God marked out his repentant saints for his utter ultimate safety and salvation it's trust him no evil no ultimate evil will be allowed to befall you and that's the way this image of the mark on the forehead is picked up isn't it in John's revelation at the end of the bible it's those who refuse the evil of the beast and the satanic power refuse his beastly mark they're the ones who have

God's name instead written on their foreheads as a mark revelation chapter 14 and they're protected from all harm in God's coming judgment and Ezekiel's message you see to his exiled hearers is so clear God's judgment is just he sees and he seeks out the truly penitent he will save them so join with them join with them repent of your wickedness of course that message is the same still for all of us isn't it because you see as verses 5 to 7 make so clear God will punish the unrepentant in full he must cleanse his land of wickedness in order to cleanse his own name and they filled his land with violence and so they'll be met with exactly that just rewards despite having all their knowledge of God's holy ways they've just become like the evil

Canaanites were whom God drove out of the land and now he is just and he will do to them exactly the same in fact they're more culpable much more than the pagans because of the great privilege and most privileged of all of those people are the religious leaders and therefore they are the most culpable of all that's why verse 6 says begin at my sanctuary that's the verse Peter quotes in his letter judgment begins where at the household of God Jeremiah foresaw that in his prophecy in chapter 7 but now Ezekiel is seeing it being fulfilled isn't it a shocking thought that God's judgment in this world would be most needed within his own church they began with the elders maybe that helps you understand

James' comment in James 3 verse 1 where he says not many of you brothers should become teachers because you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness don't imagine God's warnings are just for people outside the church they began with the elders that's a sobering word isn't it for Christian leaders for aspiring Christian leaders God's glory is declared by himself in the execution of his judgment on all evil and God is glorified in his justice but it gives him no pleasure we hear that repeatedly through Ezekiel have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked declares the Lord and rather not rather that they turn from their way and live Ezekiel 18 and you see it's that desire of

[38 : 48] God that reminds us not to miss amid all the judgment here not to miss that God's glory is also declared and defended in believing hope and that's what we see in Ezekiel's prayer there in verse 8 ah Lord will you destroy all the remnant of Israel in your wrath see Ezekiel shares God's own heart doesn't he he has no pleasure in seeing this necessary judgment we saw last week God has made him tough resilient his head like flint but his heart is tender it's heavy with pain just as Abraham's was over Sodom just as the Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem but more than that he trusts in God's promise of salvation former prophets like Isaiah had often spoken of this remnant through whom God's plan of salvation would at last be brought to the world but now it looks to Ezekiel even that remnant is going to be wiped out and so he cries out but in verses 9 to 11

God seems to just ignore his question doesn't he doesn't answer it he does get an answer he prays the same thing we'll see it later in chapter 11 but not here all he gets here is a reinforcement of the absolute necessity of judgment verse 10 I will bring their deeds upon their heads because justice demands it friends if God has no pleasure in such judgment if he is the Lord whose very name means slow to anger abounding in covenant love if his mercy outlasts his punishment by generations then why must he punish and punish so severely well the very fact that he must shows us doesn't it just how terrible human sin and evil really is the sheer weight the woe of sin in the eyes of a holy and good God God cannot dwell in the presence of evil he must execute punishment on sin and he must exit the presence of sin and evil and that's what chapter 10 narrates for us we didn't read it but you may have read it in the offering what you'll see in chapter 10 is that the glory of

God will depart from sinful people even if he has to leave behind his own house and his own household chapter 10 shows us that clear parting of the ways the gradual departure of God gathers speed and it's a scene of great movement the glory goes up from the threshold of the temple in verse 4 and from verses 5 to 17 it's all wings and wheels and noise and fire is the throne of God that Ezekiel saw in his first vision in chapter 1 is mounting up verse 15 and actually leaving the temple altogether look at verse 18 the glory of the Lord went out from the temple altogether just as at the end of chapter 11 it goes out completely from the city and most of chapter 10 is just fleshing out what Israel had seen from the very start in chapter 8 verse 4 he said the glory of God was there here it's just making clear to us that this is the same glory in case we're in any doubt that he had seen in that great vision in chapter 1 and interestingly what's repeated all the way through this chapter is that the living creatures remember that he saw holding up the throne in chapter 1 are called cherubim verse 15 these cherubim were the living creatures that he saw by the

Chebar Canal and I wonder if that's being emphasized because of the echoes here of Genesis chapter 3 when you remember mankind was first banished out of Eden out of the east gate and at the gate barring the way back to Eden were cherubim with fiery flaming swords well here God himself is going out of his earthly Eden his dwelling place his temple and verse 19 says cherubim stood at the east gate of the house of the Lord God's glory blazing above them but at any rate the message is so clear isn't it it is Icobod the glory has departed and now verse 2 look the raining fire of God's judgment has come the man in linen having marked out God's elect he fills his hands with burning coals and scatters them over the city chapter 8 ends with God's declaration

I will not pity or spare chapter 9 ends with the same doesn't it here my I will not spare nor will I have pity no pity only a parting of the ways just as in Genesis 3 there's a judicial parting isn't there of God from humankind Chris Wright puts it very clearly for God to be brought to the extremity of having to utter the terrifying words we read here speaks more loudly than anything else could of the horrific detestable and intolerable nature of human sin and the moral necessity of it being finally and justly punished the glory of God will depart even from his own people and it must do because he is a holy God and he will exit from evil that's why in our

[44 : 30] New Testaments friends the apostles of Christ warn us do not grieve away God's Holy Spirit walk worthily of the calling that he's called us to James warns us doesn't he don't embrace fellowship with the world's ways because that makes us enemies of God and he'll depart from us verse 18 then the glory of the Lord went out from the threshold of the house having become increasingly distant now God was departing his temple and soon his city but there's a delay between verse 18 here and his final departure from the city at the end of chapter 11 and we'll see next time you see that the terrible judgment that we see here isn't the whole story however real this judgment is and in chapter 11 there is interjected a ray of hope but chapter 9 verse 8 here does actually anticipate that hope in Ezekiel's prayer he prays the same prayer again actually in chapter 11 verse 13 and then God does give him an answer but even here his prayer is flagging up hope why well because it's hope in the promise of God verse 11 of chapter 9 also gives us a ray of hope doesn't it this man clothed in linen with his writing case in his hand he comes back and he says I've done what you commanded me what did he command him to do to mark out the foreheads of those penitent saints for salvation see Ezekiel's hope in God's remnant is hope in God's promise of redemption he knew that Isaiah had promised even after judgment and exile that God would gather his remnant and in that day he said the root of Jesse a new king David would arise and draw the nations to his light and recover a remnant from every land and people hope in the remnant is hope in

God's redemption redemption and it's hope in God's redemption through that promised redeemer the servant king but how can that be because see that's Ezekiel's anxiety that's his perplexity isn't it as he cries in prayer he's seen God's outpouring of wrath on Jerusalem and if God says there can be no pity there can be only wrath how can a mark on these people's forehead possibly save anybody well we can't help but think can we of the marks on the doorposts and on the lintels of the Israelite homes in Egypt when that time God sent forth the destroying angel of judgment and his penitent people who trusted in his word took shelter under those marks and those marks proclaimed didn't they that it was the blood of another firstborn it was the blood of the Passover lamb slain in their place that sheltered them that was the power of that mark and in just the same way when

Isaiah spoke about the remnant he also spoke about the servant king to come the one who would be led like a lamb to the slaughter who would be stricken for the transgressions of God's people who would bear their iniquities and bring them peace read it in Isaiah chapter 53 and then read in the gospels of the new testament the accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and then you will begin to understand the greatness of the weight of sin and the greatness of the cost to God himself to both truly punish sin and evil in this world and in the human race and to protect in his infinite mercy those who mourn and weep for that sin and who take shelter under the mark of his sovereign grace and all such reflection

Chris Wright says will drive us ultimately to the cross for only there do we find the mystery of the infinite love and the infinite justice of God fully exposed before human gaze because there under the whips swords nails and torture of Roman rather than Babylonian armies God's love absorbed God's justice in God's own self and the words I will not pity or spare were breathed again by the father as for our sake he turned his eyes away from the agony of his own beloved son these chapters and chapters like them in Ezekiel are written for us to make us wise for salvation and the Bible says the very beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord that he is a holy God he will expose sin he will execute judgment on sin and he must exit and depart from the presence of sin and he did ultimately at the cross of Jesus

[50 : 07] Christ when God the son cried out like Ezekiel will you destroy the only true remnant of Israel in the outpouring of the wrath will you destroy me my God why have you forsaken me that's what it cost the living God the Lord of glory to put his mark on you who trust in his promised redemption and Ezekiel points us ultimately there because only at the cross we really begin to understand the weight the greatness of the weight and the woe of sin amen let's pray together Lord we confess we have not yet begun to understand the weight of our sin and all that it meant for our sins to be forgiven but help us we pray to receive your word may it search our hearts and our minds bring us to our knees and make us those who will call out and weep and mourn for our sin but seek in you the only cleansing that we can ever find but the only cleansing we shall ever need so great was your sacrifice for us amen