

## Reckoning with God's Wrath. Ezekiel 5

### Confronting words vv. 8-13

I suspect if you were a Jew living in exile on the plains of Babylon, a long way from home and concerned about your family back in Jerusalem, you would be hoping to hear a cheerful word, an encouraging word from your God. Something to lift your spirits as you endure your loss.

And this is what you get from God's prophet Ezekiel

*Ezekiel 5: <sup>8</sup> "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: **I myself am against you, Jerusalem, and I will inflict punishment on you in the sight of the nations.** <sup>9</sup> Because of all your detestable idols, **I will do to you what I have never done before and will never do again.** <sup>10</sup> Therefore in your midst parents will eat their children, and children will eat their parents. I will inflict punishment on you and will scatter all your survivors to the winds. <sup>11</sup> Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your vile images and detestable practices, I myself will shave you; **I will not look on you with pity or spare you.** <sup>12</sup> A third of your people will die of the plague or perish by famine inside you; a third will fall by the sword outside your walls; and a third I will scatter to the winds and pursue with drawn sword.*

<sup>13</sup> *"Then my anger will cease and my wrath against them will subside, and **I will be avenged. And when I have spent my wrath on them, they will know that I the LORD have spoken in my zeal.***

Even if as an exile it was not spoken directly about you, it was spoken of the city and the people you love.

It was pretty confronting stuff.

And probably for you today, as you are enduring this isolation and hoping for an encouraging word, Ezekiel 5 is pretty confronting. In fact, pandemic or no pandemic, we find talk of God's anger and punishment confronting.

It is jarring culturally –We talk of anger as exploding or losing it. It is seen as impulsive, irrational, unhelpful and destructive. Something you have to deal with, not express

It is theologically uncomfortable – we like to think of God's as gracious, loving and forgiving. Here he seems overwhelmingly hostile

And talk of anger may well be distressing personally if you have been the victim of another's rages.

**How to respond? Vv. 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 17[Romans 1:18, 2:4-6; 1Thess. 1:9-10; Rev. 6:16-17]**

How should we respond?

Ignore it?

Dismiss it?

Repudiate it – say it is sub-Christian, and contrast the angry God of the Old Testament with the loving God of the New.

Or .....

Hear it for what it says it is

The Word of the Lord – for that is what it repeatedly claims to be

v. 5 and repeated in vv. 7, 8 This is what the Sovereign Lord says

v. 11 declares the Sovereign LORD,

v. 13 I the LORD have spoken in my zeal

v. 15, 17, I the LORD have spoken

Ezekiel is clear. Called by God to speak the word of God, that word is what we are now hearing.

The New Testament encourages us to hear it as the Word of God. Prophecy says 2 Pet 1:20-21 does not come from the prophet's own interpretation of things but from God, given by the Spirit.

[ Ezekiel is part of those God' breathed Scriptures Paul says in 2 Tim 3:15-17 are given to help us trust Jesus and be equipped for His service]

We should hear this chapter as it claims to be, the Word of God

And we should remember that what troubles us, God's anger against sin, is part of the gospel

1 Thessalonians 1:10

Jesus is the one who saves us from the wrath to come

The human problem says Paul is that God's wrath is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of people who by their wickedness suppress the truth, [Romans 1:18]

And that by our stubborn and unrepentant hearts we are storing up wrath for the day of wrath. [Romans 2:4-6]

uncomfortable as it may be for us to think or speak about, the anger of God, the wrath of God, is not just an Old Testament idea

So let's take Ezekiel 5 seriously so that we can learn

The cause of God's anger

The character of God's anger

The effect of God's anger

Do that so we can think rightly about God and His gospel

More – so we can feel both reality and the rightness of God's anger so that we act on it and flee and cling to the only One who can shelter us from God's just anger, the LORD Jesus

### **The cause of God's anger vv. 5-17**

#### **Context – false hope and confronting sign-acts**

Chapters 4 and 5 of Ezekiel go together.

In chapter 4 through to 5:4 we have Ezekiel performing four 'sign acts' at God's command all focused on Jerusalem. They portrayed the coming siege of Jerusalem, the sin that had brought them to that point, the deprivation they would experience during that siege – with Ezekiel eating a loaf made of the dregs cooked on cow dung day after day, and in 5:1-4, with Ezekiel's wild sword wielding, what will happen to the inhabitants of Jerusalem when the siege ends.

These signs were given to engage Ezekiel's fellow exiles with a message they did not want to believe, engage to persuade the watchers that this is what the Lord would do, to help them feel its reality.

Having acted out these scenes for just over a year Ezekiel's tongue is loosened and in vv. 5-15 he is given the word of the LORD that explains and makes clear

the meaning of these actions of Ezekiel's, that removes any ambiguity in their interpretation

Ezekiel is speaking of Jerusalem but not to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He is speaking to Jews who like him are now exiled from Judah and Jerusalem.

But they were people living with a false hope, that they would one day return to Jerusalem because Jerusalem would never be destroyed.

Jerusalem was the place the LORD had chosen to put His name, Deut 12:11, a place He had associated with Himself, with His rule over His people.

His temple was there which was thought of as His palace, with the holy of holies His throne room

For His own sake, for His reputation, the LORD had to be committed to Jerusalem. It's destruction was unthinkable.

And isn't this what numerous Psalms celebrated. Consider just

Psalm 132: <sup>13</sup> For the LORD has chosen Zion,  
 he has desired it for his dwelling, saying,  
<sup>14</sup> "This is my resting place for ever and ever;  
 here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it.

Or Psalm 48: <sup>3</sup> God is in her citadels;  
 he has shown himself to be her fortress.

<sup>4</sup> When the kings joined forces,  
 when they advanced together,  
<sup>5</sup> they saw her and were astounded;  
 they fled in terror.  
<sup>6</sup> Trembling seized them there,  
 pain like that of a woman in labor.  
<sup>7</sup> You destroyed them like ships of Tarshish  
 shattered by an east wind.

Cf. Ps. 122, 46:4-7

For the exiles – If the LORD was God, Jerusalem would always be there for them

So at the beginning of His message the LORD says v. 5 he knows of Jerusalem's special position. But for him it does not make Jerusalem inviolable, just more guilty and its destruction certain.

## Jerusalem's special position v. 5

**Ezekiel 5:**<sup>5</sup> *“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center of the nations, with countries all around her.”*<sup>6</sup> *Yet in her wickedness she has rebelled against my laws and decrees more than the nations and countries around her. She has rejected my laws and has not followed my decrees.*

Jerusalem's special position at 'the centre of the nations' is because of the Lord's choice and actions. She is not just the centre geographically of her neighbours.

She is at the centre of the Lord's plans for the nations, for the entire world. Isaiah had said that

Isaiah 2:1-4 – The mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of all mountains, ..... and all the nations will stream to it

The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem [cf. Micah 4:1-3]

In the psalms Jerusalem will be the Seat of the great promised King who would rule the world Ps. 2:6

But Lord's choice of Jerusalem makes Jerusalem's behaviour, the behaviour of those living there, even more troubling, for in their behaviour they have repudiated their relationship with the LORD whose promises they were seeking to rely on.

<sup>6</sup> *Yet in her wickedness she has rebelled against my laws and decrees more than the nations and countries around her. She has rejected my laws and has not followed my decrees.*

They have rebelled against the LORD's laws and decrees, rejected them.

The 'laws and decrees' is a phrase used repeatedly in Deuteronomy [e.g. Deut. 4:13, 5:1] to speak of the content of the covenant Israel made with the LORD at Sinai and renewed on the plains of Moab before entering the promised land. That covenant was a formal commitment between the LORD and the people of Israel, where the LORD committed to be their God and King, and Israel committed to be His people, a people who would trust Him and live according to His law, His laws and decrees.

Ezekiel's use of the phrase tells us that All that is said of the Lord's dealings with Jerusalem is said in light of that covenant. A picture of the kind of commitment involved in the covenant that the prophets use is marriage. There is an expectation of exclusive loyalty and each party keeping to the promises they had freely made.

But Israel, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, have chosen to live as if that covenant, that commitment, did not bind them v. 7 - ***You have been more unruly than the nations around you and have not followed my decrees or kept my laws. You have not even conformed to the standards of the nations around you.***

Unruly has the sense of riotous, an insolent rejection of God. The Israelites were refusing to acknowledge the LORD as their King and have their behaviour governed by their relationship with Him, by His law. Instead they were doing whatever they wanted

### **Israel's rebellion vv. 7, 9, 11 in the context of the covenant**

Not following the LORD's decrees and laws is a summary of what caused the Lord's anger, but examples of the behaviour that resulted are given by Ezekiel in chapter 22

*Ezekiel 22:<sup>7</sup> In you they have treated father and mother with contempt; in you they have oppressed the foreigner and mistreated the fatherless and the widow.<sup>8</sup> You have despised my holy things and desecrated my Sabbaths.<sup>9</sup> In you are slanderers who are bent on shedding blood; in you are those who eat at the mountain shrines and commit lewd acts.<sup>10</sup> In you are those who dishonor their father's bed; in you are those who violate women during their period, when they are ceremonially unclean.<sup>11</sup> In you one man commits a detestable offense with his neighbor's wife, another shamefully defiles his daughter-in-law, and another violates his sister, his own father's daughter.<sup>12</sup> In you are people who accept bribes to shed blood; you take interest and make a profit from the poor. You extort unjust gain from your neighbors. And you have forgotten me, declares the Sovereign LORD.*

In fact the LORD says Israel has behaved more wickedly than the surrounding pagan nations. That is not just because they were rejecting a better revelation of God. No, they did not even meet v.7 the standards of those nations.

Is that possible you think, for people who say they are God's people, who are meant to be committed to his standards, to be worse than their pagan neighbours?

Yes. Think clerical child abuse, think preachers exploiting people's need and vulnerability – say their longing for healing, to enrich themselves.

And think of how offensive that is to the righteous God

The LORD then focuses in verses 9 and 11 on Israel's abominations, which the NIV translates as detestable idols and detestable practices. Ezekiel will expand on this in chapter 8 but the word abominations again takes us to the covenant, for it is the word commonly used in Deuteronomy for idolatry.

*<sup>9</sup> Because of all your detestable idols, I will do to you what I have never done before and will never do again. <sup>10</sup> Therefore in your midst parents will eat their children, and children will eat their parents. I will inflict punishment on you and will scatter all your survivors to the winds. <sup>11</sup> Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your vile images and detestable practices,*

In Deuteronomy idolatry is the sin the LORD specifically and repeatedly said would bring His wrath upon them. Just one example

*Deuteronomy 4: <sup>23</sup> Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden. <sup>24</sup> For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*

*<sup>25</sup> After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time—if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and arousing his anger, <sup>26</sup> I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed.*

[Deuteronomy 11:16-7, Deuteronomy 32:15-27]

Idolatry is so provoking because it is contempt of the living God, spiritual adultery, abandoning the LORD for lifeless fictions. Israel v. 11 had even brought their idolatry into His sanctuary. That is like a bloke bringing his prostitute into his marital bedroom in the presence of his wife.

### **The Character of God's anger**

**Not arbitrary – Leviticus 26:21-33, Deuteronomy 28, 32:15-27**

Seeing the cause of God's anger in Israel's rejection of the covenant, in their spiritual adultery, helps us see the character of God's anger. God's anger is not arbitrary. In His response to Israel's sin God is doing exactly what He said He would do in the covenant. He is keeping His solemn commitment, being faithful to His vow. In both Leviticus and Deuteronomy, at the end of the covenant agreement, both the blessings of keeping the covenant and the curses, the punishments for breaking the covenant, had been set out.

Here is a sample of those covenant curses from the end of Leviticus.

*Leviticus 26:*<sup>23</sup> “*If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me,*<sup>24</sup> *I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over.*<sup>25</sup> *And I will bring the sword on you to avenge the breaking of the covenant. When you withdraw into your cities, I will send a plague among you, and you will be given into enemy hands.*<sup>26</sup> *When I cut off your supply of bread, ten women will be able to bake your bread in one oven, and they will dole out the bread by weight. You will eat, but you will not be satisfied.*

<sup>27</sup> “*If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me,*<sup>28</sup> *then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will punish you for your sins seven times over.*<sup>29</sup> *You will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters.*<sup>30</sup> *I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars and pile your dead bodies on the lifeless forms of your idols, and I will abhor you.*<sup>31</sup> *I will turn your cities into ruins and lay waste your sanctuaries, and I will take no delight in the pleasing aroma of your offerings.*<sup>32</sup> *I myself will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled.*<sup>33</sup> *I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins.*

Rather than being arbitrary in bringing these judgements on His sinful people, the LORD is being righteous. That is, He is doing exactly what HE committed Himself to doing in the covenant. Righteousness for both the Lord and Israel was keeping the covenant, conforming to the established and agreed behaviours, the commitments made by each party to the covenant.

Knowing that covenant also helps us understand some of the phrases we find particularly uncomfortable

### **A passionate commitment**

*Deut. 5: <sup>13</sup> “Then my anger will cease and my wrath against them will subside, and I will be avenged. And when I have spent my wrath on them, they will know that I the LORD have spoken in my zeal. [jealousy]*

God had said idolatry would provoke His anger. In the face of Israel’s idolatry many would want him to say it didn’t matter, to be indifferent. But His pronouncement of judgments to be carried out in His anger v. 13 shows He is not indifferent. He speaks, He says, in His zeal or jealousy, or passion. The LORD is not an impassive judge. He is passionately committed to His people, and to His relationship with His people. [Deut. 4:24, Deut 6:14-15]

Dumb idols can be relied on to be impassive, indifferent. But the LORD is the living God who has embraced His people with a gracious salvation.

He will not stand by and see the relationship ignored and trashed, see what rightly belongs to Him given to another

### **No partiality Deut 13:9,**

*Ezekiel 5: I myself will shave you [or withdraw]; I will not look on you with pity or spare you*

And when the LORD says *I will not look on you with pity or spare you* The LORD is saying He will judge impartially by the standards of the covenant, not be swayed by sentiment or favouritism.

That phrase was used by the LORD when instructing the human judges of the covenant about executing sentences for idolatry or murder or false witness.

Deut 13: <sup>8</sup>do not yield to them or listen to them. Show them no pity. Do not spare them or shield them. [19:13, 19:21]

They were to judge righteously and the LORD will judge righteously. The sentence of the law, of the covenant will be carried out impartially.

The LORD’s anger is the passionate commitment of the LORD to righteousness, to maintaining what HE had committed Himself to in His relationship with His people, to vindicating His holy Name and word. His anger burns until all that does not conform to righteousness is removed

### **Proportionate – Ezekiel 7:2-4, 8-9 [Romans 2:6, Revelation 20:12]**

And in His response the LORD's just anger works a proportionate punishment. It is not disproportionate. He commits Himself in chapter 7 to judge Israel according to their conduct.

*Ezekiel 7: <sup>3</sup> The end is now upon you,  
and I will unleash my anger against you.  
I will judge you according to your conduct  
and repay you for all your detestable practices.  
<sup>4</sup> I will not look on you with pity;  
I will not spare you.  
I will surely repay you for your conduct  
and for the detestable practices among you.*

*“Then you will know that I am the LORD.”*

God's justice is retributive, giving to people what they deserve according to His law for what they have done.

And the LORD's anger is not impulsive. He is not flying off the handle at a moment's notice for some small infringement because He is under stress.

He has been incredibly patient with Israel's provocation, their persistent disobedience.

### **Not impulsive 4:5; Ezk. 16, 20, 23**

*Deut. 4: <sup>5</sup> I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin.  
So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the people of Israel.*

Deut 4:5 tells us that Ezekiel had to lie on his side 'the same number of days as the years of their sin' – 390 days for 390 years.

That takes the beginning date back this reckoning of sin to the reign of Solomon. Even though he built the temple it was Solomon whose heart says Kings 'turned away from the LORD' [1 Kings 11:9] and introduced many gods into Israel for his many wives.

Over those 390 years the LORD had sent many prophets to his people to turn them back to Him, to warn of the judgment their idolatry and wickedness would bring, reminding them of the covenant, but they had not heeded them.

390 years of opportunity to repent, to recommit to the covenant, to find forgiveness.

The LORD's anger is not arbitrary but righteous, doing exactly what He said He would do.

It is proportionate and just

And it is expressed after waiting with great patience for repentance

But as the word anger itself suggests, it is terrifying in its expression.

Listen to what it is for the LORD to express His just anger, to spend His wrath on a rebellious people.

### **The Effect of God's Anger v. 8, 9, 12, 14-17, v. 13**

*Deuteronomy 5:* <sup>8</sup> *“Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself am against you, Jerusalem, and I will inflict punishment on you in the sight of the nations.”* <sup>9</sup> *Because of all your detestable idols, I will do to you what I have never done before and will never do again.* <sup>10</sup> *Therefore in your midst parents will eat their children, and children will eat their parents. I will inflict punishment on you and will scatter all your survivors to the winds.*

v. 10 is horrifying, but it describes the effect of the hunger brought on by both ancient and modern sieges. This, a covenant curse warned of in both Deuteronomy and Leviticus, is what they would bring upon themselves by their rebellion

<sup>11</sup> *Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your vile images and detestable practices, I myself will shave you; I will not look on you with pity or spare you.* <sup>12</sup> *A third of your people will die of the plague or perish by famine inside you; a third will fall by the sword outside your walls; and a third I will scatter to the winds and pursue with drawn sword.*

Unlike Ezekiel's shaving in 5:3-4 where a few hairs were left, here no remnant is mentioned. All are caught up in the judgment. There will be no escape from God's wrath.

<sup>13</sup> *“Then my anger will cease and my wrath against them will subside, and I will be avenged. And when I have spent my wrath on them, they will know that I the LORD have spoken in my zeal.*

<sup>14</sup> *“I will make you a ruin and a reproach among the nations around you, in the sight of all who pass by.”* <sup>15</sup> *You will be a reproach and a taunt, a warning*

***and an object of horror to the nations around you when I inflict punishment on you in anger and in wrath and with stinging rebuke. I the LORD have spoken.***

Experiencing the LORD's wrath will bring shame, for their pride in which they have defied God will be exposed as empty, and those surrounding them will see punishment as deserved. And then v. 16

*<sup>16</sup> When I shoot at you with my deadly and destructive arrows of famine, I will shoot to destroy you. I will bring more and more famine upon you and cut off your supply of food. <sup>17</sup> I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will leave you childless. Plague and bloodshed will sweep through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I the LORD have spoken."*

God's just anger is relentless. In His quiver are famine and wild beasts, plague and the sword, and many ways of using them. And we who have been humbled by a virus know how easily God can destroy with his arrows prosperity, health, security

It is v. 8 <sup>8</sup> *"Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself am against you, Jerusalem, and I will inflict punishment on you in the sight of the nations.*

It is a terrible thing to have the living, just, almighty, passionate God against you. He does not tire in executing his righteous judgments that restore His covenant and vindicate His word and His name. His anger stops only when it is spent.

*<sup>13</sup> "Then my anger will cease and my wrath against them will subside, and I will be avenged. And when I have spent my wrath on them, they will know that I the LORD have spoken in my zeal.*

When it achieves its goal – removing the cause of anger, justly punishing the unrighteous, restoring the order of the covenant

There is no escape from it

God's anger is real and right

We should hear this word, and believe it.

Israel's great problem was that they did not believe God would do exactly what He said

We should not make the same mistake

And we should recognise that God expects His people to live as His people, to live in conformity with His will and character

### **A warning against presumption, a warning to the world**

**Addressed first to His people [1 Cor. 6:9-11, Gal. 5:19-20, Eph. 5:3-6; Gal. 1:8-9; Matt. 6:14, 18:35]**

The people of God in Ezekiel's day had come to think that you could enjoy the protections, the benefits, the privileges of relationship with God, while rebelling against God, living making their own rules about what is right and wrong, doing whatever they pleased

Ezekiel blows that false hope out of the water.

Neither they nor we Can expect to be protected by the living God while treating Him as just another dumb idol, treating Him with contempt because you act as if He does not see and has not spoken and cannot do what He says.

The New Testament warns us against that presumption repeatedly, and hearing God's judgement, feeling in these words of Ezekiel God's passion to right what is wrong, His anger against those who despise Him,

Should make us take those warnings to heart.

We are warned repeatedly in the epistles that, in the words of Eph. 5:

Ephesians 5: <sup>5</sup>For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. <sup>6</sup>Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

1 Cor. 6:9-11, Gal. 5:19-21, 1 Cor. 10:6-10

Warned against idolatry [1 Cor. 10]

Against embracing a false gospel [Gal. 1:8-9]

Warned against unforgiveness [Matt. 6:15, 18:35]

We should take those warnings to heart

Examine yourself

Make sure you are not saying you believe in Jesus, confess Him Lord, but then choosing to do what He forbids

And thinking you will be safe because you made a decision, got baptised, go to church?

Let me talk to two groups of people

Firstly, those who have grown up in a Christian home. You may never have done anything really bad – that's what those other people do.

Convinced so much better than those who don't know what you know

And because of that those little sins – resentment of your parents, selfrighteous condemnation of others, those outbursts of anger – they are ok, because you are so much better.

There are no little sins, and it may be that growing up in a Christian home is only teaching you to be indifferent to the sins of your heart, and think it will still be ok even though you are doing what Jesus says you shouldn't

Jesus calls you to repent.

And secondly there are those who think that their circumstances are so tough that what God calls for from all His children – well, he makes an exception for you

Hurt so badly – you can nurse your bitterness

So stressful – right to angry words

Under so much pressure – even as a Christian leader – that sexual immorality – God will overlook that

God is calling you to repent

**An object lesson for the nations v. 15 [chapters 25-32, Romans 1:18 ff, Eph. 2:3]**

But this is not just a warning for those who say they are believers

God's judgment on Jerusalem, His visiting His anger upon them, was meant to be v. 15 a warning, an object lesson, to the surrounding nations.

<sup>15</sup> *You will be a reproach and a taunt, **a warning and an object of horror** to the nations around you when I inflict punishment on you in anger and in wrath and with stinging rebuke. I the LORD have spoken.*

God is the creator of all. He is not just the God of the Jews, and now not just the God of Christian believers

He is the God of all, your God whether you believe in Him or not.

He is the one who has given you life, and sustains your life

The one who has a right to your trust and worship

His law, the rules of His covenant, are an expression of His character. It tells you the behaviours that cannot have a place in the presence of the God who is judge of the living and the dead.

And it tells you that He hates idolatry, hates your giving your loyalty, trust, worship – to created things, whether that is money or power or pleasure or some so called god, or even to your self.

And it is right for Him to be angry at our sin, your indifference to or rebellion against Him.

God's just anger at your sin His holy, passionate, inescapable, effective anger, – is part of the Christian message

The gospel tells us of God's anger so that we will turn away from our sin and turn back to the living God

### **Are you someone with a false hope?**

Ezekiel was speaking to a group of people who did not listen or respond to God's warnings because they had a false hope

Their experience tells us that false hopes are dangerous, they stop you from acting when you should, just like a quack cure can stop you from seeking the right treatment when you need it.

But the book of Ezekiel also tells us that God exposes their false hope to give them a real and substantial hope, as we will see from chapters 34 on

So are you someone living with a false hope who needs to find a real hope?

Maybe you are a believer in Jesus who has been living in presumptuous sin.

Or may be you are someone who does not yet believe, and you thought God indifferent, of that God would not judge

And God has convicted you by His word that He is passionately serious about righteousness, and that He acts in judgement to remove all unrighteousness from His presence.

The good news of the gospel that declares God's judgment on sin, of His righteous anger at our rebellion, is that He sent Jesus His son to save us from that anger.

### **Finding real hope in Christ**

What Jesus was doing on the cross was dying for sin, our sin.

Jesus on the cross was dealing with God's holy wrath against sin.

This is what Jesus knew He was doing when He considered His death

On the night before He died He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane

**Matthew 26:**<sup>39</sup> Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

The Cup is an Old Testament picture of experiencing God's wrath

**Ezekiel 23:31-34**

**Isaiah 51:**<sup>17</sup> Awake, awake!

Rise up, Jerusalem,  
you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD  
the cup of his wrath,  
you who have drained to its dregs  
the goblet that makes people stagger.

**Jeremiah 25:**<sup>15</sup> This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: "Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.<sup>16</sup> When they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them."

Jesus was draining that cup so that you and I would not drink it.

The gospel says God spends His anger on Himself, on the Son of God.

**1 Thess. 1:9-10; Romans 3:25, Gal. 3:13**

And by faith in the gospel that Christ has died for our sins and risen again we are joined to Christ by His Spirit.

We die with Him on the cross, so that we have no death of judgment to face

And we rise with Him to live at peace with God.

He upholds His law – punishing our sin in Jesus, not showing favouritism, not overlooking the sins of His people

**Romans 8:31 ff.; 1 Thess. 5:9-10**

So that we can say with Paul, with Paul who knew himself to be a great sinner, richly deserving judgment because he had persecuted God's people

That God is for us

Living with a false hope – find a real hope in the God who is angry at your sin, but loves you enough to give His Son to bring you from being His enemy to be one of His loved children

Not yet a believer

God has raised the Jesus who died from the cross.

Raised with authority to judge and forgive

If God has convicted you of the reality of His judgement, if you feel His anger at your despising and disobeying Him – You know He is real. Call out to Jesus and ask for forgiveness, to be given new life

If hearing of a God who is just, and active to carry out His judgments has challenged you, find out more about Him by finding out more about Jesus

If you are a Believer who has been living presumptuously

Hope even for you

Jesus' death is Sufficient for all our sins – even our proud contempt of our saviour that would continue on with the very sins for which He hung on the cross

He can forgive your sin, He will, as you trust Him.

But to be believe in Jesus is to be joined to Him; to be united to Christ is to live like Christ for Christ. You must finish with your sin, put it to death.

And if you know your hope is that Jesus is the one who saves you from the wrath to come – persevere in Christ

For only in Him can you shelter you from the fiery storm of judgment

Persevere in living the godly life He calls you to

And remember – the world's problem, your neighbours problem, is God's just anger against sin

They may not want to hear but the gospel says the day of wrath is coming

And unless the Son has drained the cup for them they must drink the cup of God's wrath themselves

Don't become timid, or complacent, or tired

Pray and speak and work together so that they hear the gospel of the Son who saves us from the wrath to come.