

# Zechariah 05 - Vision of the Flying Scroll; Vision of the Woman (Wickedness) in a Basket

## II. Eight Night Visions (Zech 1:7—6:15)

### (6) Flying scroll (5:1-4)

#### (A) Vision (5:1-2)

#### (B) Interpretation (5:3-4)

##### (a) Covenant judgment coming (5:3a)

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###### (i) Stealing (5:3b)

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### (7) Woman in the ephah (5:5-11)

#### (A) Women's identity: wickedness (5:5-8)

#### (B) Woman's destination: Shinar/Babylon (5:9-11)

The 6th and 7th visions of Zechariah deal with the removal of wickedness. The 6th vision (v1-4) deals with the removal of individual sinner from the land through divine judgment who breaks the law. The 7th vision deals with the eventual removal of all wickedness from the future "holy land". What God promised to do in the preceding two visions (4th & 5th visions, Zech 3-4) required the purging of sin predicted in these two visions. We're so accustomed to talking about God's love and grace that we often forget that God is holy. It's hard to understand Zech 5 without remembering that God is holy. Zechariah covers a lot of content on the restoring of the nation of Israel one day, but God can't restore the nation until He first removes the sin problem. This is what Zech 5 is about. Theologian Charles L. Feinberg, who has some terrific commentaries on the OT Minor Prophets, says:

*Zechariah knows nothing (nor does any other writer in the Scriptures) of the mawkish theology which is so much in vogue in our day that considers God as the God of love, overlooking every failure, shortcoming, and defection in man. True, twice over John the Apostle in his first epistle designates God as 'the God of love,' but he sounds forth the warning of impending judgment on all ungodliness in all the writings that the Spirit of God directed him to pen. If God can overlook sin lightly because of His love, then what need is there for Isaiah to state of Him that He is 'the high and lofty One that*

*inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy' (Is 57:15)? What object is accomplished in Habakkuk's great declaration, 'Your eyes are too pure to look at evil, And You cannot look at harm favorably' (Hab 1:13)? Why should the majestic epistle to the Hebrews inject such notes as these: 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God' or 'our God is an all-consuming fire' (Heb 10:31; 12:29)? Away with half-baked theology! Let us magnify the love of God and at the same time maintain His irreproachable holiness.*

## **Zechariah 5**

(6) Flying scroll (5:1-4)

(A) Vision (5:1-2)

**1** Then I raised my eyes again and looked, and **behold**, *there was* a flying **scroll**.

**1** Then I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, *there was* a flying scroll.

**1** Then I looked up and saw a flying scroll!

**1** Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked and behold a flying roll.

- "...raised my eyes...looked" - verbs of perception, indicating that this is the beginning of another vision

- "...scroll" - God's written Word; God has disclosed Himself to mankind in three ways:

1. Natural (General) Revelation - through Creation and conscience (Cf. Rom 1)
2. His Son Jesus Christ, who is God in a human body (Heb 1:1-2)
3. Through His written Word - the only way a believer can be equipped, trained, reprovved or corrected

**2** And he said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a flying scroll; **its length is twenty cubits, and its width ten cubits.**"

**2** And he said to me, "What do you see?" And I answered, "I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits."

**2** And the angel asked me, "What do you see?" I answered him, "I'm looking at a flying scroll. It's 20 cubits long and ten cubits wide."

**2** And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof *is* twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.

- "...its length is twenty cubits, and its width ten cubits" - about 30' x 15'

— When God reveals Himself, He does it in such a way that people can't ignore it; the scroll is so large that people cannot pretend it's not there. No one could plead ignorance of God's Law because the scroll in Zechariah's vision was large enough for all to see and read.

— The identical measurements of the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle (Ex 26:8) and the porch in front of the Holy Place within Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6:3). It's not clear

whether or not these identical measurements are coincidental or point to some type of linkage.

— The identical measurements show that judgment (divine discipline) begins with the house of the LORD; these scrolls are scrolls of judgment. When God brings judgment, He starts with His people and works out from there (1 Peter 4:17). When God wants to bring revival and purification, He starts with His own.

— We often are often upset at what's going wrong in the White House, but don't pay much attention to what's going wrong in the church house or the family house.

(B) Interpretation (5:3-4)

(a) Covenant judgment coming (5:3a)

(b) Covenant sin to be judged (5:3b-4)

(i) Stealing (5:3b)

3 Then he said to me, "This is the **curse** that is going forth over the face of the entire **land**; everyone who **steals** certainly will be **purged away** according to the writing **on one side**, and everyone who **swears falsely** will be **purged away** according to the writing **on the other side**.

3 Then he said to me, "This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land; surely everyone who steals will be purged away according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears will be purged away according to the writing on the other side.

3 He responded to me, "This is the curse that is going out over the surface of the whole earth, because, according to this side of the scroll, all thieves will be ejected, and according to the other side of the scroll, all liars will be ejected."

**3** Then said he unto me, This *is* the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it.

- "...curse" - what is written on this huge scroll flying in the sky will bring a "curse" on the nation of Israel to discipline them for sin. The notion of a "curse" goes straight back to the Mosaic Law (Cf. Deut 28:15ff).

— The interpretation is that judgment is coming to the people of Israel because of sin. God must bring judgment for sin in order to restore them. None of the wonderful things God has promised to do for Israel through Zechariah (Cf. Zech 3-4) can happen until God cleans house.

- "...land" - *há arets*, can be used to describe the entire earth (Gen 1:1) or just the land of Israel (12:12; Matt 2:6). In this case (and in v6), it refers to the land of Israel due to the context.

1. Because only in the land of Judah did they swear in the name of Jehovah (v4)
2. Because in v11, the land is contrasted with the land of Shinar

3. Because the reference to the two tables of the Law restricts the curse primarily to those under the Law.

- "...steals...swears *falsely*" - stealing was prohibited by the 8th commandment (Ex 20:13); swearing falsely (i.e. taking the Lord's name in vain) was prohibited by the 3rd commandment (Ex 20:7).

— One side of the scroll repeats the 8th commandment against stealing; apparently there was a lot of theft going on in the land of Israel. According to the Mosaic Law, a person who stole from another would die, thus purging the land of sin.

— Stealing comes in numerous forms, many that people don't even think about: over-taxation, inflation, over-charging, usury, withholding wages or underpayment for work completed. It doesn't always deal with money or material goods...you can steal people's time (which is sometimes more valuable than money), or waste time when being paid by an employer.

- "...purged away" [2x] - likely refers to the "purging" of unbelieving Jews during the Tribulation period, leaving only the Remnant (Cf. 13:8-9; Ezek 20:33-38)

— These passages reveal how God will deal with unbelievers in His midst at the end of the Tribulation period, prior to saving the nation (Remnant). Many people reject the eschatological interpretation of the "purging" described in 5:3. However, when did God ever purge Israel in this way in the past? If you go to Israel today, it's obvious this purging has not yet happened as most of Israel is currently in unbelief.

- "...on one side...on the other side" - the scroll had writing on both sides, as it was on the stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments (Cf. Ex 20:15). On one side of the scroll was the curse for stealing, and on the other side was the curse for swearing falsely.

God isn't just interested in enforcing the 3rd and 8th commandments...He's interested in enforcing all of the commandments, and all of the Mosaic Law. Zechariah here is using a figure of speech called a *synecdoche*, meaning "a part for the whole."

Commandments 1-4 instructed Israel, upon their rescue from Egypt, how to interact and worship God; Commandments 5-10 instructed Israel how to interact with the world around them. When Zechariah sees a Commandment #8 on one side of the scroll, and Commandment #3 on the other side, this is a *synecdoche*. Both sections are covered, both parts of the whole, so the scroll is referring to all 10 Commandments.

So God is not just upset that Israel is violating only two of the Commandments, He's upset that they are violating *all* of the Commandments. And if they're violating all 10 of the Commandments, what are they doing with the other 603 laws in the Mosaic Law (613 laws total)?

The Book of Deuteronomy recapitulates and expands the original 10 Commandments. Once you get past the historical narrative, Moses elaborates on Commandment 1 with

numerous additional explanatory laws; he does the same for all 10 Commandments.

(ii) Swearing falsely (5:4)

4 I will make **it** go forth," declares the LORD of armies, "and **it** will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name; and **it** will **spend the night within that house** and destroy it with its timber and stones."

4 I will make it go forth," declares the LORD of hosts, "and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name; and it will spend the night within that house and consume it with its timber and stones."

4 "I am bringing this about," declares the LORD of the Heavenly Armies. "The curse will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who lies in my name. The curse will remain in his house until that house has been completely destroyed, right down to its timber and stones."

4 I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

- "...it" [3x] - the "curse" (v3); God's discipline and judgment for Israel's disobedience to the Mosaic Law

- "...spend the night within that house" - once this judgment starts, God will not respect their privacy

— God's judgment starts in the land, then goes into people's private homes; even the privacy of their homes would not afford protection from judgment that the Lord would send on those of His people who broke the Law.

(7) Woman in the ephah (5:5-11)

(A) Women's identity: wickedness (5:5-8)

**5 Then** the angel who had been speaking with me went out and said to me, "Now **raise your eyes and see** what this is that is going forth."

**5** Then the angel who was speaking with me went out and said to me, "Lift up now your eyes and see what this is going forth."

**5** Then the angel who had been talking with me stepped forward and told me, "Please look up and see what's going out."

**5** Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what *is* this that goeth forth.

- "Then" - the *waw* connective continues the sequence of visions

- "...raise your eyes and see" - verbs of perception, indicating a new vision

— *So little is human nature capable of readily appropriating divine revelation that it is not only necessary for God to let the necessary visions appear but also to stimulate the*

*recipient's attention step by step lest, overcome by the power of the heavenly, he fail to appropriate all that God desires to offer. [Leupold]*

6 And I said, "**What is it?**" Then he said, "This is the **ephah** going forth." Again he said, "This is their appearance in all the **land**."

6 I said, "What is it?" And he said, "This is the ephah going forth." Again he said, "This is their appearance in all the land"

6 So I asked, "What is it?" He replied, "This is a basket making its appearance." He also said, "This is what it appears to be in the entire land."

**6** And I said, What *is* it? And he said, This *is* an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This *is* their resemblance through all the earth.

- "...What is it?" - Zechariah, in his sinful nature, was incapable of understanding divine revelation. Thus, it is necessary for God to show him the vision, then prompt him step by step, otherwise Zechariah would be unable to understand all that God is communicating.

— This speaks to our need for enablement to understand the things of God while in our finite and sinful state. Fortunately during the Church Age we have the Spirit's ministry of illumination to make the things of God in Scripture understandable to us. Sometimes we forget how much we need that ministry of illumination because we rely on our intellect, experience, prior teaching, etc.

- "...ephah" - a basket that held about a half bushel (five gallons) of dry or liquid material (Cf. 1 Sam 1:24; Ruth 2:17). Its use here suggests that Israel's sins had accumulated greatly in Zechariah's day.

- "...land" - *há arets*, refers to the land of Israel (see note on v3)

7 And behold, a **leadcover** was lifted up." *He continued*, "And this is a **woman** sitting inside the ephah."

7 (and behold, a lead cover was lifted up); and this is a woman sitting inside the ephah."

7 Look, a round lead cover was being lifted, and there was one woman seated inside the basket!

7 And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this *is* a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah.

- "...lead cover" - an abnormally heavy weight over the top of the ephah (it would normally be covered by wicker or stone), which kept the woman inside the basket. The lead cover was to guarantee that the woman inside could not get out.

— The woman was only visible by lifting the lead cover. Like the evil she represents, she is mostly hidden from sight.

- "...woman" - when used symbolically in Scripture, usually speaks of religious evil (Cf. Prov 7; Matt 13:33; 1 Tim 2:12; Rev 2:20; 17:1-7)

— Why did God so often use women to symbolize evil? Perhaps the reason is that sin entered the world originally as the result of a woman: Eve. Perhaps it is because the Hebrew word translated "wickedness" is feminine in gender. It is definitely not because women are inherently more evil than men, because they are not.

8 Then he said, "**This is Wickedness!**" And **hethrust her into the middle of the ephah** and threw the **leadweight** on its opening.

8 Then he said, "This is Wickedness!" And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening.

8 And the angel said, "This is evil!" So he shoved her back into the basket and snapped the round, lead cover over the opening.

8 And he said, This *is* wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.

- "...This is Wickedness!" - the woman in the basket has a name: Wickedness. The woman personified wickedness.

— One popular interpretation is that this "woman" is the harlot of Rev 17, with a golden cup, dressed in purple and gold, a prostitute, mother of harlots, who represents a city and a system who will dominate the earth during the Tribulation period. Babylon (the "woman" in Rev 17) represents the three-legged stool of the New World Order: politics, commerce, and religion.

- "...he" - the interpreting angel

- "...thrust her into the middle of the ephah" - the angel evidently picked the woman up and threw her into the basket (ephah) and put the lead cover over her. Obviously some conflict was involved.

— "Wickedness" apparently did not want to be restricted

- "...lead weight" - "lead cover" (v7); if this vision is linked to Israel in end times prophecy, this lead cover likely symbolizes the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit (Cf. 2 Thess 2:6-7)

— The lead weight covering the basket pictures God's restraint of evil, confining wickedness (the woman) in the basket. As bad as things were in Zechariah's day, things could've been much worse if God had not been restraining evil.

*The vision of prophecy (Zech 5) contains the germ which is afterward expanded and developed in such detail in Rev 17-18. [Arthur Pink, The Antichrist, 281].*

2 Thess 2:6-7:

6 And you know what **restrains**him now, so that he will be revealed in his time.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now **restrains** will do so until He is removed

(B) Woman's destination: Shinar/Babylon (5:9-11)

9 Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there **two women** were coming out with the **wind** in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of the **stork**, and they **lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens**.

9 Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens.

9 Then I looked up to see two women coming forward with the wind filling their wings. (They had wings like those of a stork.) They took up the basket, holding it between the earth and sky.

9 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven.

- "...two women" - unidentified, but likely representative of God's agents for His purpose by the fact that they have wings. Some interpret them as agents of evil, but if they were that, wouldn't they try to help wickedness escape the basket?

- "...wind" - *ruah*, a Hebrew word referring to the Holy Spirit

- "...stork" - *sida*, means "faithful one"; they are strong, motherly birds capable of carrying loads in flight a long distance. They were unclean birds for the Israelites (Lev 11:19; Deut 14:18), thus, they were appropriate carriers of the contaminated basket full of wickedness.

- "...lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens" - speaks to wickedness being removed from the land of Israel. Notice that the removal of wickedness, just like the removal of Joshua's garments (Cf. 3:4), was an act of free grace on the part of the covenant-keeping God.

— We know from other passages that this will occur during the Tribulation period. There will be a moment when the Jewish people, under great distress, will recognize that Jesus is their Messiah. The whole nation will be saved at the end of the Tribulation period.

— Zech 3:9: For behold, the stone that I have put before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I am going to engrave an inscription on it,' declares the LORD of armies, 'and **I will remove the guilt of that land in one day**.

— Where is the "guilt" (sin, iniquity) of the land going? In a basket to Babylon (v11).

10 So I said to the angel who was speaking with me, "Where are they taking the ephah?"

10 I said to the angel who was speaking with me, "Where are they taking the ephah?"

10 So I asked the angel who was talking to me, "Where are they taking the basket?"

**10** Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah?

- Zechariah was an inquisitive prophet, always asking questions

— Some believers think they know it all...I've studied John before so I'm not going to go to another study of John. The Bible is so deep that you could've studied John 50x and on the 51st time you will still see something you didn't see before and learn something you didn't know.

**11** Then he said to me, "To build a **temple** for her in the **land of Shinar**; and when it is prepared, she will be **set there on her own pedestal.**"

**11** Then he said to me, "To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal."

**11** He answered me, "To the land of Shinar, so they can build a temple to the woman in the basket. Then when its preparations are complete, the basket will be set there in its place."

**11** And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.

- "...temple" - *bayith*, sometimes translated "house" but here it means a temple. The same word describes the temple that David wanted to build for God (Cf. "house" 2 Sam 7:13,16).

- "...land of Shinar" - mentioned 7x in Scripture (Gen 10:10; 11:2; 14:1,9; Is 11:11; Dan 1:2, Zech 5:11). In every instance it is used as a definite geographical location that covers more than just Babylon, but it is employed to denote the surrounding land (Babylonia).

Essentially, it's the area of Mesopotamia (between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers).

— Babylon is 350 miles east of Jerusalem, 58 miles south of Baghdad; it is the location where false religion began (Cf. Gen 10). It will become a religious authority center during the Tribulation that will be just as spiritual (in a pagan sense) as the spirituality that God offers in the Davidic Covenant.

— So this vision is showing evil (wickedness) being removed from Israel and carried in a covered basket to Shinar (Babylon), where evil and paganism started. Zechariah's vision is that the new abode for wickedness will again be set up in Babylon. The idolatry of Babylon must once and for all be separated from the worship of the God of Israel.

- "...set there on her own pedestal" - once the temple is complete, the "woman" (wickedness) will be let out of the basket, the lead cover will be removed, and she will sit on a pedestal in her temple as an object of worship.

The woman in Zech 5 is the same woman described in Rev 17-18:

## Hitchcock

The Second Coming of Babylon, 109.

<b>ZECHARIAH 5:5-11</b>	<b>REVELATION 17-18</b>
Woman sitting in a basket	Woman sitting on beast, seven mountains, many waters (17:3,9,15)
Emphasis on commerce (basket for measuring grain)	Emphasis on commerce (merchant of grain, 18:13)
Woman's name is Wickedness	Woman's name is Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth
Focus on false worship (temple is built for the woman)	Focus on false worship (17:5)
Woman taken to Babylon	Woman called Babylon

The woman of Rev 17-18 represents the New World Order...a system of economics, politics and religion that excludes God. This is something that Satan has always wanted to build. God stopped that in Gen 10 by confounding the languages so the builders could not cooperate with each other, but Satan has always wanted it back. He can't have it back yet, but one day Satan will get his chance to form a one-world government once the woman is let loose from the basket.

Zechariah penned these words 19 years after Babylon's fall to Cyrus. If the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah had been fulfilled in the fall of Babylon, then Zechariah's words seem out of place. However, if the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah were not fulfilled when Cyrus captured the city, then Zechariah's vision could relate in some way to those earlier prophecies. God was holding wickedness in check, but there would come a time when wickedness would once again have a dwelling place in Babylon.

*Now, the prophet Zechariah foretells that in the last days all wickedness, with idolatry particularly in mind (Cf. Matt 12:43-45), that will be existent in Israel at that time will go back forcibly to the place of its origin, Babylon, the great apostate religious system. Such is the meaning of being settled on her own base (pedestal). When we come to the book of Revelation all of this is clearly set forth in Rev 17-18. Not only the evil of Judaism, but that in Christendom as well, will wind up and culminate in that abominable system called mystical or mystery Babylon. The greatest sin in Israel, when wickedness itself, was idolatry. It will come to it's settled abode at the very place of its inception (Rev 18:24).*

[Charles L. Feinberg, *God Remembers: A Study of Zechariah* (Wheaton: Van Kampen, 1950, p93).

For more information about Babylon in eschatology, see: [Babylon; Zechariah 11&12 Babylon's Rising \(Zech 5:5-11\)](#).