

Message #8**Zechariah 5:1-11**

Let's begin today by having me list some personal things and you determine and rate the subject whether or not you would classify it as: 1) Big Sin; 2) Small Sin; 3) Not Sin

A. Smoking Marijuana; B. Extra-marital affair; C. Getting Drunk; D. Homosexuality or Lesbianism; E. Skipping Church; F. Watching Pornography; G. Abortion; H. Not giving the right amount of offering to God; I. Gossip; J. Stealing; K. Cursing; L. Losing your Temper; M. Greed. How do you rate those things? Now how do you think God rates those things?

Frankly, everything in that list is something that God classifies as sin. They are all sin and when it comes to sin and God, there are only two ways He deals with sin:

- 1) God deals with sin through Grace Forgiveness when it is honestly admitted and confessed.
- 2) God deals with sin through judgment when it is not admitted and covered.

Now getting Israel or anyone for that matter to honestly face their sin is a big problem. This is the reason God does not pour out His blessings on Israel as a nation and on many individuals. God cannot and will not ever pour out His blessings until the sin is removed and that point is stressed in Zechariah 5.

Zechariah went to bed one night and received eight revelatory prophetic visions and so far those visions are very positive for Israel:

Vision #1 - God was with Israel and watching over Israel in her land (Man in Myrtle Trees)

Vision #2 - God would crush all enemies of Israel (Four Horns and Craftsmen)

Vision #3 - God would make Jerusalem His blessed capital city of Israel and the world
(Man with Measuring Line)

Vision #4 - God would judicially Cleanse Jerusalem and Israel and Remove Filthy Garments
(Joshua the High Priest and the Branch)

Vision #5 - God would see that the Temple in Jerusalem was rebuilt and Israel will become
the shining light for the whole world (Golden Lampstand and two Olive Trees)

Those are great visions. Now of course the thing that must happen for God to do all of this is that Israel and all people must come to terms with their sin. This is the problem with Israel and most people. God cannot and will not just start blessing those who have not faced the truth about their own sin. **God must remove the sin and in order for God to do that, the people must face the sin.**

THE WORLD IS DOMINATED BY EVIL SIN AND FALSE RELIGION, BUT ONE DAY GOD WILL COMPLETELY REMOVE IT FROM THE EARTH AND INDIVDUALS WHO WANT TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S BLESSINGS MUST BE WILLING TO FACE THEIR OWN SIN.

This is certainly aimed at Israel. She has a great future in store, but in order for individual Jewish people to experience it, they must come to honest terms with their own individual sin.

There are two visions in chapter 5, which are the sixth and seventh visions of Zechariah. The final three visions (6, 7, 8) all have to do with judgment.

PROPHETIC VISION #6 – Vision concerning the flying scroll. 5:1-4

What we see clearly from this vision is that God uses His Word to judge. The written Word of God is the basis for God's judgment. So people had better be very serious about the written Word of God.

According to **verse 1**, Zechariah lifted up his eyes and saw a “flying scroll.” The word “scroll” (megillah) is a word that means “a roll.” In this case Zechariah saw a roll that was unrolled or a scroll that was open and spread out.

Books at this time were not nice bound books like we have, but were handwritten on sheets of papyrus paper or animal skins and put together to form a long scroll. Then the scroll was rolled up. This word was used as a technical term for some Old Testament books of the Bible.

Now as Zechariah looked up and saw the scroll, the angel asked him what he saw and Zechariah simply observed what was there. **As we have said throughout this study, the central key to proper interpretation of God's Word is proper observation of the text.** The job of a Bible student is to simply observe what is in the text. Do not add nor subtract. Simply see the words there.

There are four important facts to observe:

Fact #1 - Zechariah saw a flying scroll. 5:1-2a

This scroll is sanctioned by God out of heaven and it is flying where God wants it to fly. It has great speed and force. God is the One who controls where this scroll is flying and what this scroll is to do. We may be certain that it will accomplish its objective.

Fact #2 - Zechariah saw a measured scroll. 5:2b

Now a typical scroll was eight to ten inches wide and 20 inches long. But what Zechariah saw was like a flying billboard. The average billboard sign is about 14 feet high and 48 feet wide.

Now according to **verse 2**, Zechariah was asked what he saw and he said that he saw a flying scroll that was 20 cubits long and ten cubits wide. Now the typical cubit was 18 inches, so Zechariah saw a giant scroll that was 30 feet long and 15 feet wide.

The written Word of God comes out of heaven and it is big in heaven. In order to have a relationship with God and to have fellowship with God, it must be based on a careful understanding of the Word of God. In light of this text, it must be based on an understanding of the Word of God and what it says about sin.

God's Word measures the sin of Israel and the sin of each of us. If we are to have a close relationship with God, we must confront sin by the Word of God. Disobeying God's Word is the reason why Israel has been cut off from having a great relationship with God.

Now since the scroll could be measured it obviously was unrolled, which means the time of the fulfillment was at hand. God had unrolled the scroll that contains His Word and He sent it to the people and it was time to read the scroll and time to implement what the scroll was saying, which means judgment was coming.

Sometimes when you go to sporting events, an airplane flies over pulling some trailing advertisement. As Zechariah looked into the sky, he saw something like that, only it was a scroll flying in the sky sent from heaven. What that opened scroll said is that God was going to fulfill what it said on the earth.

Fact #3 - The angel said this is a judgmental curse scroll. **5:3**

As Zechariah looks at the scroll, the interpreting angel explains that this flying scroll pronounces a curse over all the earth. The word "curse" (alah) is used as a collective term to describe all of the curses that are contained in the O.T. law (Deut. 27:15-26; 28:15-68).

The target of the curse is "the whole land." Specifically this has to do with the curse that is aimed at Israel and the land because the Law was specifically given to Israel only (Ex. 20:1-2).

However, the fact that this scroll contains many different listed sins indicates that God's Word makes the entire earth sinful and guilty. God's Word comes from heaven and it declares all guilty and all short of the glory of God.

God's Word condemns the whole world. It condemns the nation Israel and it condemns every single individual. That O.T. law screams we are all guilty.

Now there are two specific sins that are specifically named here; however, the scroll was long enough that it may have contained the entire O.T. law. In fact, Dr. Charles Feinberg said that these two commandments are "taken as representing the whole Law of Moses" (*The Minor Prophets*, p. 294). These two sins were probably very prevalent sins as the people had come back to the Promised Land.

Now the two sins are both found in the famous Ten Commandments, but you would not necessarily think they were the big sins. They aren't adultery or murder. But these were big to God.

(Sin #1) - The sin of stealing. **5:3a**

Now the sin of stealing is one of the famous Ten Commandments. It is commandment number eight. Now we may assume that stealing was a major problem at this time.

It is possible that people were taking things from others that did not belong to them; but we do know from Scripture they were stealing and robbing from God.

Notice what is said here, everyone who steals will be purged away. If you have ever stolen anything you will be purged away according to the written Word of God. The Word of God condemns the person who has ever stolen anything and that is enough to get you into hell.

So the real question is have you ever stolen anything? In your lifetime did you ever take anything that did not belong to you? How about something in a store? How about some answer from someone else's paper? How about some money you did not report on taxes? How about that time you found something that wasn't yours and your attitude was "finders, keepers, losers, weepers?" Or, how about not giving the proper amount of offerings to the Lord? Malachi says if people don't give God the proper offering, they are stealing from God and robbing Him (Mal. 3:8).

Here is what Israel needs to know and here is what every human needs to know. God's Word condemns stealing and if one does not face it and gain the forgiveness of God, he will be purged.

(Sin #2) - The sin of cursing. 5:3b

The sin of cursing or swearing a false oath is commandment number three. This was a sin committed against God. Notice **verse 4** explains the swearing as swearing falsely by the name of God.

So together, the sins of stealing and cursing represent sins committed against humanity and sins committed against God that will bring the judgment of God on a person and keep them out of the eternal blessings of God.

Now these two sins are, for the most part, what people would consider to be secrets sins. If you steal something, typically you do it so no one sees or knows. Who would actually know whether or not someone was giving the proper offering?

If you swear some oath before God, who knows whether you follow through with what you promised. These two sins are not like murder or adultery that are known and seen by others.

What God says is that He sees it and knows it and He will use His Word to not only judge, but also eliminate from the earth those who do these things. They will be purged or cleansed or banished from existence.

Fact #4 - God says His judgment scroll will judge every house and individual. 5:4

God says I will send forth My Word and I actually will judge each house and each person in the house. Notice God says, "I will make it go forth."

People think they are getting away with sin in the privacy of their own house. They think no one sees or knows. God says, "I do." God says I know it, I see it and I will judge it. God's judgment is very personal to every individual. God says I see what goes on during the day and I see what goes on during the night. God will assess everyone.

God says I will not only consume the people, but the very house right down to the timber and stones. God's judgment will be thorough.

Wise are those who repent and face their sin and turn from it. You would be very wise to flee to Jesus Christ, knowing God knows all about you. He knows all the sins and His case against you says, "Guilty."

PROPHETIC VISION #7 – Vision concerning the woman in a basket. 5:5-11

This seventh vision is that of a woman in a basket. The point of this is that sin is trying to break loose in full force and God says there will come a time when I will remove it and destroy it from the land.

According to **verse 5**, an angel tells Zechariah to "lift up your eyes and see what is going forth." What this means is that there is a real angel and Zechariah is again seeing something real. It would appear that this vision happened in close proximity to the previous one because it does not appear that he had gone back to sleep.

Now when Zechariah looked up and saw what he saw, he knew what it was, but did not know what it meant. So he says, "What is this?"

According to **verses 6-7**, what he saw was an "Ephah or a measuring basket going forth in all the land and a lead cover was taken off the basket or ephah and there was a woman sitting inside the basket.

The cover was made of lead and it has been speculated to weigh about 70 pounds. When the 70 pound cover was raised, there was a woman inside the basket.

Now an ephah was a well-known dry measuring basket that amounts to about 3/4ths a bushel. An ephah was used for measurement and obviously what is being measured is sin and wickedness. Now if a woman is sitting in a $\frac{3}{4}$ bushel basket, she would appear to be very small to the point that she can be held captive by a 70 pound lead cover.

This is the way sin appears. Sin to most people appears to be small. It is no big deal.

But what we do see from this is that God is the One controlling the sin amount that is permitted to hit His world.

According to **verse 8**, this woman in the basket represents wickedness. The Hebrew word for “wickedness” is feminine. I think the contextual point is on the seduction of false religion. The picture here seems to be that the woman is struggling to get out of the basket and wreak havoc on the entire world.

Now one question that has been raised is why wickedness is connected to a woman. I think there are two explanations for this:

- 1) Because sin was first introduced to humans through a woman - Eve (I Tim. 2:14).
- 2) Because it illustrates Religious prostitution that seductively leads people away from God.

According to **verse 9**, Zechariah saw two other women come with stork wings and they lifted up the ephah located between the heaven and the earth and they took it away.

The stork was a migratory bird with long wings, capable of flying great migratory distances (Jer. 8:7). Many who have studied this have actually observed that storks actually migrate further than the distance from Israel to Babylon.

Now this is specific wickedness. This is wickedness that is being transported to a specific place. According to **verses 10-11**, the specific place where this woman is transported is to the “land of Shinar,” which is Babylonia and she is set on her own pedestal.

Now the Babylonian false religion is the Muslim religion. This is the Babylonian harlot. This is a specific prediction about what God will do to the Muslim religion. He is going to take it out of Jerusalem and out of Israel and He is going to crush it and destroy it.

We believe the purpose of this very scene is for the judgment that will take place in the Tribulation against the Babylonians and her religion. Four chapters in the Bible teach us that Babylon and its religion will be destroyed: Jeremiah 50-51 and Revelation 17-18. If I were an Arab or if I were a person involved in Islam or the Muslim religion, I would take a very serious look at these chapters.

What God is showing Ezekiel is that He keeps track of sin and wickedness, and one day He will judge it and remove it. He will move it out of Israel and then the land will be holy.

Of all the sins that bring condemnation to the world, none will be judged worse than false religion. False religion has stolen from God and false religion has cursed God.

This is what most people don’t understand. False religion robs God. It sits on its own pedestal and God will bring her down. He will destroy the Muslim religion and all other false religions and He will remove it from the earth. That is what Zechariah sees in this vision.

We need to see ourselves honestly. We are sinners and we need a Savior and there is only One.

Now you can be like Israel and not admit the truth or you can admit the truth and by faith flee to Jesus Christ. It is your choice now to make, but there will come a day when God will close your basket of opportunity and it will be too late.