

ZECHARIAH

Chapter 5

A Vision of a Flying Scroll

Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a flying scroll! 2 And he said to me, “What do you see?” I answered, “I see a flying scroll. Its length is twenty cubits, and its width ten cubits.” 3 Then he said to me, “This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land. For everyone who steals shall be cleaned out according to what is on one side, and everyone who swears falsely shall be cleaned out according to what is on the other side. 4 I will send it out, declares the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter the house of the thief, and the house of him who swears falsely by my name. And it shall remain in his house and consume it, both timber and stones.”

5:1–4 The sixth vision. Lawbreakers are condemned by the law they have broken; sinners will be purged from the land. (CSB)

5:1 *flying*. Unrolled and waving like a banner, for all to read. (CSB)

scroll. This was a book-scroll, or parchment, of great size, or consisting of many large leaves fastened together. (Kretzmann)

This scroll comes from heaven and contains God’s message. Jeremiah was told to write on a scroll all the words the Lord had spoken, and Ezekiel was supposed to eat a scroll filled with lamentations (Ez 3:1). (TLSB)

5:2 *twenty ... ten*. Unusually large (especially in its width), for all to see. Such a bold, clear message of judgment against sin should spur the people on to repentance and righteousness. (CSB)

It is massively oversized, 30 by 15 ft., the scroll had the same dimensions as the Holy Place in the original tabernacle and in Solomon’s temple (1 Ki 6:3). This links the heavenly scroll and its message to the earthly sanctuary being restored. (TLSB)

5:3 *curse*. The interpreting angel revealed to Zechariah that the scroll contained a curse, just as the Lord’s covenant with Israel included a series of curses for those who failed to obey His commandments (Dt. 27:15-26; 28:15-68). (TLSB)

on one side ... on the other side. Like the two tablets of the law (Ex 32:15), the scroll is inscribed on both sides (cf. Eze 2:9–10; Rev 5:1). (CSB)

who steals. He breaks the seventh commandment (Ex 20:15). (CSB)

This was an especially prevalent sin in economically depressed Judah. (TLSB)

WILL BE BANISHED – ESV has “cleaned out.” This is the Hebrew *naqah* which is the expression meaning “purge out” or “empty” from the holy people. (TLSB)

everyone who swears falsely. See 8:17. Such a person violates the second commandment (compare v. 4 with Ex 20:7). Although theft and perjury may have been the most common forms of lawbreaking at

the time, they are probably intended as representative sins. The people of Judah had been guilty of infractions against the whole law (cf. Jas 2:10). (CSB)

Swearing an oath of innocence was one feature of the Israelite system of justice (Ex 22:11; Nu 5:19-21). To swear falsely was likely a common abuse of this legal procedure. (TLSB)

shall be cleaned out – That is, the sinners who refuse to repent, who persist in their wickedness, must be cut off and removed; the holiness of God cannot rule in any other way. (Kretzmann)

5:4 *shall enter ... and consume.* “It” refers to the curse (v. 3). God’s word, whether promise (ch. 4) or warning (as here), always accomplishes its purpose (cf. Ps 147:15; Isa 55:10–11; Heb 4:12–13). (CSB)

People who steal and swear falsely might escape human punishment but not the Lord’s. His curse will enter a house and remain there until the house is consumed. His covenant, including its curses, was still in effect. (TLSB)

These words are properly expressive of the curse and of the punishment of God upon every form of deliberate transgression. The Lord is like a consuming fire upon everything that is called sin. (Kretzmann)

5:1–4 God’s curse rests on all who fail to keep His Law perfectly (Gal 3:10), but in Christ, that curse is removed. For “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). How blessed we are that our debt was canceled by having it nailed to the cross (Col 2:14)! • Lord Jesus Christ, thank You for removing God’s curse, which rested on me because of my sin. Assist me as I share this Good News with others. Amen. (TLSB)

A Vision of a Woman in a Basket

5 Then the angel who talked with me came forward and said to me, “Lift your eyes and see what this is that is going out.” **6** And I said, “What is it?” He said, “This is the basket that is going out.” And he said, “This is their iniquity in all the land.” **7** And behold, the leaden cover was lifted, and there was a woman sitting in the basket! **8** And he said, “This is Wickedness.” And he thrust her back into the basket, and thrust down the leaden weight on its opening. **9** Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, two women coming forward! The wind was in their wings. They had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven. **10** Then I said to the angel who talked with me, “Where are they taking the basket?” **11** He said to me, “To the land of Shinar, to build a house for it. And when this is prepared, they will set the basket down there on its base.”

5:5–11 The seventh vision. Not only must flagrant, persistent sinners be removed from the land (vv. 1–4), but the whole sinful system will be removed—apparently to a more fitting place (Babylonia). (CSB)

5:5 *the angel* – This was the angel who acted as the interpreter of all these visions. (Kretzmann)

came forward – There was a pause in the revelations of the Lord. (Kretzmann)

lift your eyes – What was appearing before his eyes was something that he should observe very closely. (Kretzmann)

Begins the seventh of Zechariah’s eight visions. (TLSB)

going out. The angel called attention to the fact that the object in the vision was moving away. (TLSB)

5:6 *the basket.* A normal ephah-sized container would not be large enough to hold a person. This one was undoubtedly enlarged (like the flying scroll of vv. 1–2) for the purpose of the vision. (CSB)

Lit, an “ephah,” a container roughly the size of a bushel. This basket must have been oversized, since a woman was inside and a lid on top (v 7). (TLSB)

iniquity. When the contents of the basket were revealed to Zechariah, he understood better why it was labeled “iniquity.” (TLSB)

The object in the vision was evidently a receptacle having the shape of an ephah, and the ephah was chosen because it was often called the measure of unrighteousness and of deceit. (Kretzmann)

5:7 *leaden cover* – Lead is a heavy metal, which unlike gold, silver, bronze, and iron, was considered quite useless in biblical times. A lead cover is most appropriate when confining iniquity. (TLSB)

woman. Perhaps the reason the people’s wickedness was personified as a woman (cf. also Rev 17:3–6) is that the Hebrew word for “wickedness” (v. 8) is feminine in gender. (CSB)

Some women and female figures posed threats to the worship of the true God in several ways. The foreign wives of Solomon “turned away his heart after other gods” (1 Kg 11:4). Marriage to foreign wives was a problem among the exiles who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon (Ezra 9:2; 10:18). In Revelation, Babylon is called the “mother of prostitutes” (Rv 17:5). (TLSB)

5:8 *wickedness.* A general word denoting moral, religious and civil evil—frequently used as an antonym of righteousness (e.g., Pr 13:6; Eze 33:12). The whole evil system was to be destroyed (cf. 2Th 2:6–8). (CSB)

The ultimate wickedness is idolatry, worshiping other gods and goddesses (SC, First Commandment). Judeans taken captive to Babylon would have become familiar with worship of the fertility goddess Ishtar. Queen Athaliah of Judah, who promoted idolatry even within the temple, is called “that wicked woman” (2 Ch. 24:7). The woman in the basket is the personification of idolatry. (TLSB)

5:9 *two women.* Divinely chosen agents. (CSB)

Likely angels, though the setting is in a vision, which may not depict heavenly reality; this is the only place in Scripture where female figures have an angelic role. It is fitting that these two carry away the wicked woman. (TLSB)

wind. Also an instrument of God (Ps 104:3–4). The removal of wickedness would be the work of God alone. (CSB)

the wings – Humanlike angels are not depicted with wings elsewhere in Scripture, though they are described as flying (Rv. 14:6) Cherubim and seraphim are winged. (TLSB)

stork – Large white and black bird with powerful wings. The Judeans would think of storks as birds on the move since they were migratory and hatched their eggs elsewhere. (TLSB)

5:11 *land of Shinar.* Babylon, the land from which the exiles had come, a land where many Judeans were still living (2:6–7). (TLSB)

In the land of Babylon, representative of the ungodly world, wickedness was to have its place, to the forever excluded from the kingdom of the Lord. The congregation of the Lord is the holy Christian Church, and for that reason the Lord will brook no open wickedness in its midst. Willful and unrepentant sinners must be excluded from the communion of saints. Note: There may be a special reason for comparing the essence of all wickedness with a woman; for so also the great harlot of the Book of Revelation is described, the kingdom of Antichrist being the climax and summary of all godless doctrine. (Kretzmann)

house. Temple (Hg 1:9). In Jerusalem, the temple was being restored for the worship of the true God; in Babylon, the people were building a house for an idol. (TLSB)

base. The pedestal on which the woman's image was placed. (TLSB)

5:5–11 The ever-present temptation to idolatry came to the people of Jerusalem who had worked so hard at rebuilding the temple. God made it clear that idolatry had no place among them; that wicked woman had to be carted off to Babylon. Idolatry has no place among us either. "You shall have no other gods" (Ex 20:3). We were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The triune God has given us life and salvation. Worship and serve Him alone! • Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and shall be forever. Amen. (TLSB)