

X. Zechariah in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel According to Zechariah
“Vision #6: The Flying Scroll
Vision 7: A Woman in the Basket”
Zechariah 5
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In this study we are in Zechariah 5, looking at two visions that are both in this chapter and need to be looked at together, for they are in concert with one another. First I'd like to look at the book of Matthew because I want to give this as a preface to our study of the vision of the Flying Scroll and the vision of a woman in the basket. I have had several people tell me they have read this and were challenged by it and when I read it, I was a little bit challenged as well. I have to say the Puritan commentators that I consult on this have been a great blessings, but there have been three or four Old Testament professors that I have used in this study that have been extraordinary in their insight on this text. Those professors being Dr. D. A. Carson and Dr. O. Palmer Robertson and particularly the insight of Dr. Robertson. These two have drawn from our Puritan forefathers, but also just their handling of this text and especially Dr. Robertson's calling as a professor of the Old Testament at Westminster Seminary during those years of my matriculation. Let's look now at Matthew 7 to set a predicate for us as we look at Zechariah's sixth and seventh vision, as we look at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount and this applicatory warning from our Lord.

Matthew 7:21-23 says [21] *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [22] On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ [23] And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’*

What is the evidence that they had no personal relationship with Him? It is when He says ‘You workers of lawlessness.’ On this side of eternity, the covenant community continues to be a mixed population. Some are saved in the covenant community and some are lost. So, how did they get into the covenant community, particularly if there is a faithful church that does things like a pastors class, that does things like elders examining for a credible profession of faith? How can they possibly make their way in? They can and we have evidence of it in the New Testament. I don't know who did the interviewing for baptism in the church of Jerusalem, but Simon, the magician, got by the Apostles and was baptized and looks like within days it was manifested that he did not have a real personal saving relationship with Christ for Peter pronounces upon him that his heart was still in the bondage of iniquity (Acts 8:9-25). Peter is not talking to him about remaining sin that every believer has but he was saying to him that sin was still reigning in his life. So somehow he got in.

We don't have to look further than our Lord's company of the 12 Disciples, do we? There is Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed our Lord. We can look at the ministry of the Apostle Paul in his reference to Demas (II Timothy 4:10) and Alexander Coppersmith (II Timothy 4:14), that there were those who did great harm and who had been in his company that later proved not to have that personal, vital relationship with Christ.

In this text from Matthew, we are taken to the portals of eternity, to the very Judgment Day. Here are the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares and this is in fact, our Lord's Day of Judgment. Not all of the lost will be outside of the membership of our Lord's Church for some of the lost will have been in the church. It is so delicate a task to identify them that our Lord tells us we have to be careful. You don't just snatch out tares on your own in sight, for there are some things that we have to leave to the Day of the Lord, because the within the tares and wheat, you may actually take up wheat or you may take up tares that soon are to become wheat. So we're called to great carefulness in these matters.

The point I want to get to you is that the company of God's people on this side of eternity is always mixed. There are those who are, as we sing in the great hymn, *The Church's One Foundation*, there are 'false sons within her pale.' Some will be revealed before the Day of Judgment, but the day of judgment will be a day of separation. There will be some at the Day of Judgment that if were asked by Him, "Why should I let you come into heaven," they would say 'Oh, I was a member of the church, and by the way, it was a good church' or 'Oh, I had a ministry of prophesying. I had a miracle ministry. I had a ministry of casting out demons.' There would be multiple things that they will claim according to this text.

The text also tells us that our Lord says, 'Depart from Me' and what is the problem? The problem is as He says 'I never knew you.' There was no saving personal relationship with Christ. They had found their way and made their way and secreted their way into the covenant community. Because those who guard the church cannot see the heart, sometimes you can say the right things and make it in and create such a facade of an external life of hypocrisy that humans cannot penetrate it simply by observation but that will not stop the Lord. Then the Lord gave the evidence 'Depart from Me, I never knew you' and the evidence was they were workers of lawlessness. There was no pursuit of holiness. Now, it's not our pursuit of holiness that saves us for the fact that they pursued sin instead of holiness was the evidence that they did not have the Root. The bad fruit showed the lack of the root in Christ, but my point is, it awaited the Judgment Day and the judgment of God Himself to be able to identify all of the lost because some have found their way into the covenant community.

If you look back into the Old Testament, the Old Covenant, you will see many who were within the boundaries of God's covenant community – the nation He had made covenant with – but they did not know the Lord and God's judgment fell personally and familial for there were consequences from generation to generation, and God's judgment fell corporately as a whole nation would be taken away under the discipline of God and deposited in a foreign land.

That is something that we know of and here are two visions that give us clarity on this matter as Dr. Robertson rightly said when he quoted from the New Testament, 'judgment begins in the household of God, and not everyone who has found roost and presents in the household of God actually belongs to the Lord God.' May I put it very crassly, none of us here will go into heaven because we have a certificate of membership at Briarwood Presbyterian Church. Do we have a personal relationship with Christ? Briarwood Presbyterian Church will do its best with a gracious spirit, but with clear parameters to try to do that which would admit people through the exercise of the keys to the Kingdom, into the body of Christ with charity and clarity at the same time. We'll do our best, but we will not get it right. That doesn't mean we won't try to do the right thing because we never want to give false assurance, but there will be those who are adept at the deceit necessary to make their way in to the covenant community, thinking that at the Last Day they will be able to present what they've done and where they were a member, as if that will get them into heaven, but it will not. The judgment of God is sure, ultimate and eternal.

Now, let's look at Zechariah 5. I want you to see how this has unfolded in this passage of Scripture. I do want to say I also appreciate Paul House and the work he has done in the Old Testament particularly in the ESV which has been a blessing to me as I have studied this book. We will start by looking at Zechariah's sixth vision, the Vision of the Flying Scroll.

Zechariah 5:1-4 says *[1] 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 (found out) according to what is on one side, and everyone who swears falsely shall be cleaned out (found out) according to what is on the other side. [4] I will send it out, (what I bring as a cleansing act of judgment) 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."*

I believe that phrase 'cleaned out' is appropriate here in the ESV translation but it could also be translated 'found out.' to get it. I want to give you seven things in the vision that we need to identify to help us understand the intent of the vision which will be united to the seventh vision at the end of the chapter, the vision of the basket and the woman.

Number one, there is a scroll. Now, the Bible actually doesn't speak of scrolls very much. It does in the Book of Revelation and some other texts of Scripture, but when the Bible speaks of a scroll, it always relates the scroll to the Word of God inscripturated in a scroll. So this scroll is indicating the Word of God.

Number two, is that this scroll is of a massive size. This scroll is 20 cubits in length and 10 cubits in width. A cubit would be about 18 inches – from the elbow to the end of the hand. If you do the math 20 cubits would be 30 feet and 10 cubits would be 15 feet. So this scroll is 15 feet wide and 30 feet long. That's a pretty good size. So this is a scroll meaning scripture that is massive. It is an attention gaining size, that is all encompassing.

Number three, this scroll is unrolled, otherwise it couldn't be measured. So this is not a scroll that is still sealed or a scroll that needs to be unsealed, as in the book of Revelation. It is a scroll that has been unsealed for you to understand its intent and its purposes. God has made its content known. Not only can it be measured but understood.

Number four, the scroll has writing on both sides of it. Now it's here that we begin to get some clarity, because when the scroll speaking of the Word of God, massive encompassing, unrolled, therefore available and revealed to us as it has writing on both sides. This gives us a little clue here. Let's look at Exodus 32. When God gave His law, what did He give it on? He gave it on tablets of stone.

Exodus 32:15-17 says *[15] Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets that were written on both sides; on the front and on the back they were written. [16] The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. [17] When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp."* Further down in this chapter you find the apostasy and therefore the judgment that is about to fall upon the covenant people who manifested that they did not love the Lord by pagan worship and neglecting the worship of God.

Here we see that God reveals His law on tablets that He writes on the front and the back. Now, how is His law eventually captured for the people of God? It was written upon scrolls. It would be kept in the scrolls in the Ark of the Covenant. Once they entered into the land that God

had given them, the Land of Promise, the writing of the scroll, the writing of the law on both sides would be read from Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. There would be read the blessings from one and the cursings on the other – there was both the blessings of the law obeyed and the cursings that come with its disobedience. The fact that this scroll is written on both sides, brings us back to a certain genre of God's Word, and that is the law of God itself, which was delivered by God Himself on tablets with the writing on the front and the back. That would not have been missed by a priest who is now a prophet named Zechariah and should not be missed by us.

Number five, this scroll is unique in action. Now, I don't know about you but I haven't seen any 30 by 20 foot scrolls in my life, and certainly not one that is flying. This one is flying, which means it is moving yet suspended in air, which means it is going toward something yet hovering in the air, meaning it is moving with direction, yet it is suspended in the air itself.

Number six, we have at least some of the scroll's content revealed to us in the eighth and the ninth commandment of the Law of God, further affirming that we're speaking of God's law. Zechariah 5:3 says [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 (found out) according to what is on one side, and everyone who swears falsely shall be cleaned out (found out) according to what is on the other side. (24:10)* In other words, those who violate the eighth commandment which has to do with stealing, they will be found out and those who swear falsely which is a violation of the ninth commandment shall be cleaned out, found out, or judged with the curse of this law, and that is on the other side.

Now, do I believe that's the only two laws that are important in God's Word? No, of course not. I think they are picked out because they point both horizontally and vertically, because when you steal, you not only dishonor the Lord, but you injure others. It's vertical and horizontal with the emphasis on the horizontal. But when you swear falsely, you injure others the horizontal, but you have borne testimony when you have taken the name of the Lord in saying the truth, but you haven't said the truth. Now you have sinned vertically and the emphasis is the sin against God with implications to your neighbor, while the other is directed at their neighbor with implications to God. So I think they've been chosen very pointedly and they were also sins that the Bible tells us were prevalent among the covenant community of God's people and constantly were being addressed by the Lord.

One of the things I commend to you is the larger catechism. The larger catechism has a whole section on the exposition of God's law and if you were so committed to going and reading those expositions, while I commend to you the shorter catechism, I would love to request of you that you consider just working through the larger catechism in its expositions on the Law of God, and specifically as a follow up to this sermon. It would be worth your while to look at the expositions of the larger catechism, as to the sins of the eighth commandment and the sins of the ninth commandment.

Number seven is, that this judgment, while universal, is personal, unstoppable and consequential. Notice this judgment is going over the whole land, but it is personal – everyone will be found out. He uses two examples – stealing and bearing false witness. As these two examples are used, we see that this corporate judgment is personally delivered. Remember what it says in Matthew 7 when it says 'The one who says to Me, Did I not...? I will say to them individually, I never knew you' which is also applicable and inevitable – I will surely find them out and though they build their home as a fortress to protect them, it will not stop Me. He also says 'it shall remain in his house and consume it, both timber and stones.' This judgment is eternal and consequential. This judgment cannot be stopped by the defenses we erect are the

excuses that we manufacture. This judgment is sure and the judgment that's going to the world begins with the household of God.

One might be thinking, 'Harry, why don't you think this is the judgment of the last day against the whole world?' Number one, because it's using the Mosaic covenant that the whole world has not had delivered to them, but we have had delivered to us as a covenant community. Now the world has the requirement of the works of the law upon the heart in terms of their conscience but this is revealed covenant law that has been given.

Secondly, when it refers to the land, I think you could make it say the whole earth, but I think it's speaking of the Promised Land, where the law was read from Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. Zechariah 5:3 says that 'this is the curse that goes out over the whole face of the whole land,' that land that I gave to My covenant people. There is no place there that you can hide and this judgment will not find you out. So did the judgment find out individuals in the 12 tribes? Yes. Did it search out people throughout the 12 tribes? Was God merciful, withholding eternal judgment yet? Yes, He has, but this is a judgment to His people and it has eternal and familial consequences.

Look at what happens to David's family. Look at what happens to the families of others as the sin and its consequences move upon generation to generation. I want to show you a New Testament application of this. Let's look at Hebrews 6. This is a text I am constantly asked about where it like these are saved people but somehow they get lost. I thought you believed that once you're truly saved, you're forever saved. I do believe that but not everybody within the covenant community is truly saved and sometimes it becomes evident before the final Day of Judgment. Here's a little thing to help you. The great promises of assurance that are complete in Christ show up in the book of Hebrews in the odd numbered chapters, but in the even numbered chapters (2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12) you see the warnings of covenantal apostasy of what God does to sort out the mixed multitude as judgment begins in the household of God.

Hebrews 6:1 says *[1] Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, [2] and of instruction about washings (baptisms), the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. [3] And this we will do if God permits.*

He is not saying that you should leave behind your foundational doctrines, for He's saying, let's don't stay there, let's move forward. In other words, He's saying babes become young men. Young men become fathers. Young ladies become older ladies of the faith who become mature. He's calling us to maturity and to go on to maturity. You don't have to keep going back and laying the foundation but let's build on the foundation. Then He gives instructions about baptisms or washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, eternal judgment, so we have these foundational doctrines now so let's build on them. Let's continue in the text.

Hebrews 6:4-6 says *[4] For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, [5] and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, [6] and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.*

Here He says 'fallen away' not fallen down, which all believers do. This is a particular case who stood with truth, benefited in the covenant community and then stood away from truth and against the truth, fallen away and it's impossible to restore them again to repentance. In other words, there comes a time within the covenant community that there are some who fall away.

That's not people that were saved and then lost, and they can't get saved again. Those are people who came in the saved community falsely and while there, they benefited. You do know that, don't you? I mean, whether you're saved or not, you get benefits from watching people getting saved. You're seeing lives change. You're seeing marriages put back together. You're seeing families made true in Christ and holding Christ. You're seeing young men and women in the context of their singleness bearing witness for Christ that stands in stark contrast to the world.

You're seeing all of those things happen and you are tasting of the Holy Spirit by being in the covenant family. You may not have been sealed by Him, but you're tasting of Him. You are seeing Him. You are drinking of these benefits constantly, and yet being within the blessings of God's covenant community, it eventually becomes manifest that you don't have the root and therefore you begin to despise those things, you begin to attack them and assault them. It may be with gossip, it may be with slander, but it begins to be manifest – the antipathy, not the sympathy, the antipathy against God Himself and the blessings become a curse. The curse of God finds them out and the eternal consequence of God's judgment reaches into the covenant community and in this case we're looking at an individual case where God is shutting the door of grace, not at death, but even now in life.

In Hebrews 10, He'll give an example this with Esau where he could not find repentance, even though he sought for it with tears. Normally we know the day of grace shuts at death for nobody will get saved after they die. That is one of the reasons our reformers were so upset, for it was the manipulation of people thinking they could get people saved after they die. When death comes, then comes the judgment. So, there's no salvation, no reincarnation and no second chance but He is telling us there is a group within the household of God that don't know Him, and the judgment of God falls upon them with the eternal consequences even before the day of death.

That's what the flying scroll vision is pointing to – a comprehensive reality of God's judgment that begins in the household of God, that begins to search out some, prior to the final Day of Judgment and it has everlasting consequences. Those consequences can't be stopped by the defense systems of one's house and what one has manufactured, and it even reaches in with implications into the household. Now, do you understand why preachers, when they stand to preach who love Jesus and love their people, never take for granted whether they know Christ personally or not, but constantly keep calling them not to get saved again, but they constantly keep calling, lest there be some who came as false sons within the pale that they would yet come to Christ, because there are such individuals as this.

Now we move from the comprehensive judgment within the covenant community personally directed to its corporate direction, and this is where we'll end this study. Let's look at the next vision in Zechariah 5. Zechariah 5:5-11 says [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 (the measuring basket) that is going out." And he said, "This is their iniquity in all the land."* (back to a universal judgment throughout 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."*

So now we have the corporate effect of judgment, the corporate judgment. I want to show you a New Testament application of this in the Book of Revelation – Revelation 2. What is the New Covenant community called? It's called the Church of Jesus Christ. What is one of the wonderful word pictures of the church in the New Testament? It is the lampstand. Revelation talks about the seven lampstands and this is the warning to the church at Ephesus in particular.

Revelation 2:1-7 says [1] *“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.*

[2] “‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. [3] I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. [4] But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. [5] Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. [6] Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. [7] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’

Did the lampstand get removed? Yes. If you go look for evangelical faithful churches in Asia Minor and Turkey you will search long and hard. God's judgment fell corporately upon churches that would not remember, repent and recover the first things. He removed churches. He removes denominations. He will corporately remove them, not just individually work in them, but corporately remove them. Let me show you another example in Revelation 3. This is the warning to the church at Laodicea. When ‘you’ is used in this passage, it is plural so He is talking to the church, not an individual.

Revelation 3:14-16 says [14] *“And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. [15] “‘I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! [16] So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit (spew) you out of my mouth.* Again, He is talking about corporate judgment – local churches, denominations in their unfaithfulness. God brings a corporate judgment throughout the professing church world. Now let's go back to Zechariah 5 as we close out this study.

What is this basket in Zechariah 5? This is what is known as a measuring basket. By the way, this was a massive measuring basket. In Deuteronomy 25:13-16 we're told to always be faithful in your measuring basket. At times a person would take a deal and some guys would have two baskets. They have a basket when they're selling and they have a basket when they're buying. The basket, when they're buying is a little bigger than the basket when they're selling and the basket when they're selling is a little smaller, although they say they're both the same size. We call it buy low, sell high. They did that by false measuring devices – a measuring basket that was when they sold something that was small and when they bought something, they brought the basket to measure what they're buying and it was a little bit bigger. So this is a measuring basket of deceit.

In that measuring basket of deceit is a woman who is declared as wickedness. Parmer Robertson made the comment on this saying; ‘In the New Testament, we have the man as sin and in the Old Testament, we have the woman of sin. (I love what he says next) Do not ask me what I just said and what it means. I don't have the slightest idea.’ But here is a woman of wickedness.

Who is this woman of wickedness? She is the corporate wickedness of a people who all together have named the name of the Lord in the past, but don't know the Lord and are in rebellion against the Lord. In this basket is this entity of the woman and they won't let her out and to make sure she stays in; a leaden lid is put on top of massive weight so that she cannot get out.

Then there are two women like storks. In the Old Testament the stork was considered an unclean animal. To this very day, the storks that make their residents in or below the land of Israel, always migrate northward to the place we call the Fertile Crescent. Another name for that place that appears in your Bible is in Genesis 10 and is called Shinar, where a city called Babel built a Tower of Babel in rebellion against God. That same area would become Babylon, and God's people corporately would be taken there for a time in judgment, but this is speaking of a judgment taken away to Babylonia, the land of Shinar that's irrevocable – Ichabod, the glory of God has departed. The lampstand has been snuffed out and removed and just as there was no place for repent in the personal judgment (Hebrews 6), there is no place for revitalization, revival or renewal in that church or in that denomination, as they have been brought under the judgment of God and have been taken away never to be found again. Yet God's work would continue in those places.

The application of this from the old to the new, are apostate churches that fall under the judgment of God Himself. My dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful to be able to say this; in the context of serving a local church in a presbytery and in a denomination that I think I can safely say, bears the marks of imperfect but intentional faithfulness. But we must not let our guard down. Satan is a liar and a murderer and a thief and he not only works in the lives of individuals, he works corporately. That's why Paul said to the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20:28-30, *[28] Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. [29] I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; [30] and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*

Let not such leaders ever find a place, lest they lead a church, a presbytery, or a denomination unto judgment, but let God allow us faithfulness so that the lampstand is not removed; that we're not deposited in the land of Shinar, fastened to a base with a house that incarcerates forever. But by God's grace may we be faithful and our hope is in the faithfulness of our God and that we will maintain Christ-exalting, Spirit-filled, God-glorifying commitment – on mission, on message, and in ministry. Let's pray.

Prayer:

God, thank You for the time have been together in Your Word. Thank You for the Lord Jesus, our Redeemer. Thank You, O God, for what You have done in and through our lives. We give You praise. We give You thanksgiving. Your mercies are new continually. I love our vows – ordination vows, membership vows, baptismal vows, for in humble reliance upon Divine grace, we will endeavor. We rely on Your grace, Your Holy Spirit. May He, with the Word, lead us that we would be faithful to Christ and instead of judgment coming upon unfaithfulness, we will see the blessings of God taking the faith of Your people to grow individually and corporately from faith to faith, in Jesus' Name, Amen.