

The Prophecy of the Flying Roll, the Ephah and the Woman

What is the explanation of the mysterious prophecy found in Zechariah 5? What is the flying “roll”? The “woman”? The “ephah”? How does this prophecy impact us today?

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In Zechariah chapter five is a most intriguing prophecy. We read, “Then I turned and raised my eyes, and saw there a flying scroll. And he said to me, ‘What do you see?’ So I answered, ‘I see a flying scroll. Its length is twenty cubits and its width is ten cubits.’ Then he said to me, ‘This is the CURSE that goes out over the face of the whole earth: ‘Every thief shall be expelled,’ according to this side of the scroll; and, ‘Every perjurer shall be expelled,’ according to that side of it” (v.3).

What is this all about? What is this “curse”? What is the importance of this prophecy? What does it have to do with OUR generation?

The Hebrew word for “roll” here is *megillah*, meaning a “roll,” or “volume.” This word is used of the LAW of God, the Torah (Psalm 40:7). This prophecy therefore relates directly to the LAWS of Almighty GOD!

The Scroll

Many people today think the LAWS of God have been done away – abolished – abrogated – that Christ came to “do away” with that old “Law” which they say was “against us.” They assume and believe that He nailed that old “law” to the cross, thus abolishing it for all time.

But this is a LIE of Satan the devil. Paul wrote of God’s Law, “Therefore the Law is HOLY, and the commandment HOLY AND JUST AND GOOD” (Rom.7:12). He added, “the law is SPIRITUAL” (verse 14). That which is spiritual, of God, is eternal – and the laws of God is eternal – “All His precepts are sure. *They stand fast forever and ever*, and are done in truth and uprightness” (Psalm 111:7-8).

Christ Himself said, “Do NOT think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly I say to you, still heaven and earth pass away, one jot [Greek *iota*, Hebrew *yod*, the smallest letter] or one tittle

[the smallest stroke in a Hebrew letter] will BY NO MEANS PASS FROM THE LAW till all is fulfilled” (Matt.5:17-18). Those are very plain words, indeed! In fact, God is going to JUDGE the world by the standard of HIS LAW – THE TORAH!

Punishment for Law-breaking

The Messiah is quoted, as saying, “Behold, I come, in the scroll [“volume,” King James Version] of the book it is written of me.” When the Messiah returns, He will JUDGE the world, and punish the evil-doers! As Paul wrote, “Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those *who do not obey* the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe” (II Thess.1:6-10).

Judgment is coming! Jude wrote of Enoch who prophesied, “Now Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied about these men [wicked men] also, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute JUDGMENT on ALL, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (Jude 14-15).

Punishment comes because of broken law!

“The CURSE of the Law”

Zechariah continues, “I will send out *the curse*, says the LORD of hosts; it shall enter the house of the *thief* and the house of the one that *swears falsely* by My name. It shall remain in the midst of his house and consume it, with its timber and stones” (v.4).

Stealing and lying are the primary impulses and sins of our modern society. People lie, cheat, swindle, defraud, embezzle, rip off, steal, commit burglary, larceny, and theft as a way of life, and even use God’s name to cover their tracks and make them seem innocent and honest.

The “curses” of God are listed in Deuteronomy 27 and 28 – the curses for disobedience to the laws of God. They are immutable. Being written down in the scroll implies that their contents are beyond escape or repeal. God said to Israel, “CURSED is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law” (Deut.27:26). Disobedience to God’s Law leads to multiple, terrifying, horrible CURSES in one’s life, and ultimately to the penalty of DEATH (Rom.6:23).

A similar scroll to the one mentioned in Zechariah 5 was given to Ezekiel. He writes, “Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of

a book was in it. Then He spread it before me; and there was writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it were *lamentations and mourning and woe*" (Ezek.5:10). These are the cries of those who suffer punishment due to breaking God's immutable, inexorable, eternal LAWS!

The apostle Paul writes, "Christ has redeemed us from the CURSE of the LAW [that is, the penalties of law-breaking], having become a curse for us [He became our sin-offering, laying down His life for us, paying the penalty of our sins for us], for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'" (Gal.3:13).

The "curse of the law" IS THE DEATH PENALTY! But God sent His Son, to die for us, to pay that enormous penalty in our stead, thus REDEEMING us from the death penalty, and restoring us to God's favor. As Paul also declared, "Therefore, having been justified [made right] by faith [in Christ's sacrifice and death for us], we have PEACE with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom.5:1). And, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be SAVED from WRATH through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the DEATH of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom.5:9-10).

How is this possible? Because when we repent of sin, and accept Christ as our Saviour, and are baptized in Him, that enormous weight-load of sin which previously burdened our life is REMOVED, like a dump-truck dumping a huge load of rocks and gravel and dirt. And now we receive the Spirit of God, as a begettal (Rom.8:9-10, Eph.1:13-14; Acts 5:32), and Christ begins to LIVE His life IN US through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

As Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but *Christ lives in me*; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal.2:20).

Be sure to read my articles, "What Is the Truth about Law and Grace?", "Was the Law Nailed to the Cross?", and "A New Look at Galatians."

After all is said and done, therefore, Paul wrote, "Do we then make VOID the law through faith? Certainly NOT! On the contrary, we ESTABLISH THE LAW!" (Romans 3:31).

A Closer Look at the Flying Scroll

Let's take another look at the "flying scroll" of Zechariah.

The fact that this was a "flying" scroll implies that its contents – the curses and punishment – would be distributed to the guilty with swift, sudden action. Since it was unrolled, its size was known, and its writings were clearly seen by everyone – nothing was hidden or buried. So no one had any excuse, saying he didn't know the laws, the curses, or the judgments promised to fall upon the heads of the disobedient.

Being written on both sides, even as the Ten Commandments were written, implies that it is complete, comprehensive, and nothing was left out. One side of the scroll denounced the person who swore falsely, that is, took God's name in vain – the third commandment, found on the first of the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. It stands for our duty to God. Many claim to be true Christians or servants of God, but their very works, words, and thoughts cry out to the contrary. They show their apostasy by their works. In effect, they blaspheme God and take His name upon them in vain. They are not His. They are rejected. As the apostle Paul wrote, “They PROFESS to know God, but in works they DENY Him, being abominable [detestable], disobedient, and disqualified for every good work” (Titus 1:16).

The other side of the scroll denounced theft, the eighth commandment, setting forth man's duty to his fellow man. This commandment was on the second tablet of the Ten Commandments. It summarizes man's duty to man. We are commanded to love our neighbor as ourselves, and no one would “steal” from himself!

The size of the flying scroll, 30 feet by 15 feet, is the same size as the dimensions of the Temple porch. “The vestibule [porch] in front of the sanctuary [Hebrew, *heykal*, the main room of the Temple, also called the “holy place” in Exo.26:33 and Ezekiel 41:1] of the house was twenty cubits long across the width of the house, and the width of the vestibule extended ten cubits from the front of the house” (I Kings 6:3).

The porch or vestibule was the entrance to the Temple, and was where the Law was usually read to the people. Since the flying roll was the same size, it is authoritative with divine authority and is a message to all the people from God.

The Sin of Stealing

As is written on the flying scroll, “Everyone that stealeth shall be cut off” (v.3) – literally, “cleared away” – removed. None can escape. As Moses warned, “The land is subdued before the LORD, then afterward you may return and be blameless before the LORD and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; *and be sure, your sin will find you out*” (Num.32:23).

God will without exception call all to judgment at that time, from one side to the other side.

The “thief” cursed in this prophecy refers primarily to those who steal from God – who do not pay Him their required and commanded *tithes and offerings!* Says the *Jamieson, Faucett and Brown Commentary*, “The ‘theft’ immediately meant is similar *sacrilege* to that complained of, *the withholding of their due portions from the Lord's servants, the Levites* (Neh.13:10); *and the withholding of the due tithes and offerings from the Lord* (Mal.3:8). They **ROBBED GOD BY NEGLECTING TO GIVE HIM HIS DUE** in building His house, whilst they built their own houses” (vol.2, Zech.5, p.675).

In other words, they carried on their own business, did their own “thing,” but neglected the Work of God! This is sheer robbery in God’s eyes, and failure to obey God in tithing faithfully brings on the awful CURSE described above! As Malachi also wrote, “You are CURSED WITH A CURSE, for you have *robbed Me*, even this whole nation. Bring ALL the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try [test, prove] Me now in this, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open for you the WINDOWS OF HEAVEN and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it” (Mal.3:9-10).

Because of their resistance to God’s command, the houses these people build for themselves will be consumed, “with its timber and stones” (Zech.5:4).

Says the Commentary, “Stealing and perjury go together; for the covetous and fraudulent perjure themselves by God’s name without scruple (see Prov.30:9). The ‘curse’ will therefore enter ‘their house’ – their family will suffer the consequences. “In vain they guard and shut themselves up who incur the curse; it will inevitably *enter* even when they think themselves most secure” (*op. cit.*).

The Sin of Blasphemy and Perjury

The other major sin denounced in this flying scroll is the sin of “perjury,” or “bearing false witness.” To “swear falsely” by God’s name is to take His name upon you but to ignore, renounce, and reject His Law – His Torah – His true way of life!

People swear falsely when they claim to be a Christian but reject the laws of God! They swear falsely when they claim to represent the Messiah, but teach contrary to His teachings and the laws of God! They “swear falsely” when they PRETEND to be “Christian” on the outside, but are full of hypocrisy and evil on the inside!

Pretence, hypocrisy, and perjury are akin to blasphemy in God’s sight!

The whole world today reeks of this terrible sin. The pretence, hypocrisy, and lying conduct of millions of people, who claim to be Christian, but who do not study the Bible, pray daily, and OBEY God’s laws, is a loathsome stench and reeking abomination in the nostrils of God!

This was the sin of the Pharisees and Sadducees of Christ’s time. He warned His disciples, “Take heed and beware of the *leaven* of the Pharisees and the Sadducees” (Matt.16:6). He explains this warning in Luke: “Beware of the leaven [yeast] of the Pharisees *which is HYPOCRISY*” (Luke 12:1).

The Greek word here is *hupokrisis*, meaning “acting under a feigned part, i.e. deceit, hypocrisy – dissemble, pretend, feign.” A *hupokrites* was “an actor under an assumed character (stage-player), i.e. a dissembler, hypocrite.”

Isaiah spoke of such. He wrote, “For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to *practice hypocrisy*, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail” (Isaiah 32:6, KJV).

In the last days, Paul foretold, men and women would depart from the true faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, “speaking LIES IN HYPOCRISY, having their own conscience *seared with a hot iron*” (I Tim.4:1-2).

Today could well be called “the AGE of the hypocrite,” or the “Hypocritical Generation.”

Does this not refer to many of God’s supposed “people,” today? They fail to tithe, yet they fraudulently claim God’s name, to be ‘His,’ to be converted “Christians.” Some even teach dogmatically *against* tithing and obeying God’s Law – and are bringing upon themselves, *THE CURSE which is written!*

The Woman and the Ephah

The next prophecy of this chapter is related to the first. Zechariah says: “Then an angel who talked with me came out and said to me, ‘Lift your eyes now, and see what this is that goes forth.’ So I asked, ‘What is it?’ And he said, ‘It is a basket [Hebrew *ephah*, a measuring container which equals about one bushel] that is going forth.’ He also said, ‘This is their resemblance throughout the earth: Here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket [*ephah*]; then he said, ‘This is Wickedness!’ And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth” (Zech.5:5-8).

A lead cover is very heavy. The woman symbolizes a great religious idolatrous deception which has gained supremacy in the world – a great fallen Church! She is described in Revelation as follows:

“The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of *abominations and the filthiness* of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: ‘MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints And with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Rev.17:4-6).

Truly, as the angel told Zechariah, this woman is “Wickedness!” She is the fount of sin and debauchery, false doctrine, false teaching, and hypocrisy, pretending to represent God, but in reality the servant-whore of Satan the devil!

Zechariah’s prophecy shows that this wicked, vile, filthy woman will be JUDGED, imprisoned and no longer allowed to teach and spread her filthiness or

fornication. She will be locked away in the “basket” and imprisoned, with a lead cover so that she can never escape!

Zechariah goes on, “Then I raised my eyes and looked and there were two women, coming with the wind in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket [ephah] between earth and heaven. So I said to the angel who talked with me, ‘Where are they carrying the basket?’ And he said to me, ‘To build a house for it in the land of Shinar; when it is ready, the basket will be set there on its base’” (Zech.5:9-11).

Two Sisters

We read in the Scriptures that God married “Israel” at Mount Sinai (Jer.3:20), but Israel committed adultery and forsook Him, turning to the path of sin and idolatry, abomination, disobedience, and brought upon itself the curses of God’s law.

Later, Israel divided and began two kingdoms – the House of Israel, composed of ten tribes, and the House of Judah, composed of Judah [the Jews] primarily (see II Kings 17:18). Ezekiel refers to these two separate nation-groups as follows: “Son of man, there were TWO WOMEN, the daughters of one mother. They committed harlotry in Egypt, they committed harlotry in their youth. . . . Oholah played the harlot even though she was Mine . . . With all their idols she defiled herself” (Ezek.23:1-7).

Ezekiel continues, discussing the other woman, “Now although her SISTER Oholibah saw this, she became more corrupt in her lust than she, and in her harlotry more corrupt than her sister’s harlotry. She lusted for the neighboring Assyrians . . . Images of Chaldeans . . . In the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea” (verses 11-15).

These two sisters represent wayward, backsliding Israel and Judah – that is, the House of Joseph, led primarily today by the United States and Great Britain, and the Jews of the House of Judah (modern day “Israel” in the Middle East).

Nevertheless, the day is soon coming, God declares, when the two wayward sisters will REPENT of their sins, and return to Him in heart-felt remorse and grief over their transgressions, and they will seek and search for Him with their whole heart, after they have been severely punished with the curses of the law, for their sins. God says to them, “Because you have forgotten Me, and cast Me behind your back, therefore you shall bear the penalty of your lewdness and your harlotry” (verse 35).

When God punishes these two women, He says, “Thus will I cause lewdness to cease from the land, that all women may be taught not to practice your lewdness. They shall repay you for your lewdness, and you shall PAY for your idolatrous sins. *Then you shall KNOW that I am the Lord GOD*” (Ezek.23:48-49).

When they repent, God will forgive them, and restore them to true greatness. Ezekiel says that in that day, soon to come, “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and

you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a NEW HEART and put a NEW SPIRIT within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put MY Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezek.36:25-27).

God says then He will be their God and they will be His people (verse 28). They will loathe themselves for their former abominations, and be ashamed (verses 31-32). But God will cleanse them, and restore them to greatness, upon their own land, which will become “like the garden of Eden” (v.35). At that time, all the Gentile nations will observe this miracle of restoration and come to KNOW that God, the true LORD Yahveh, has rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate (v.36).

Says the Lord, “Like a flock offered as holy sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days [margin, “appointed feasts”], so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. *Then they shall KNOW that I am the LORD*” (Ezek.36:38).

The Two Sticks

At that time the House of Ephraim, representing the ten “lost” tribes, and the House of Judah, will become joined together, like two sticks which become “one” (Ezek.37:15-17). God declares, “Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them ONE STICK, and they will be ONE IN MY HAND” (Ezek.37:19).

These two groups of people are compared to TWO WOMEN. They are the peoples of Joseph, the Anglo-Saxon peoples, with their fellow countrymen, and the Jewish nation of Israel, the Jews. When they have repented and been restored by God, then He will USE them to smash and put away forever the Wicked Harlot, the Whore of Babylon, the Roman Catholic Church and all her “churchlings,” which sprang up out of her over the centuries and millennia. They will be imprisoned in the “ephah,” a “measure,” meaning they will be “measured,” judged, condemned, and sent into exile to a desert, desolate, empty, waste region – ancient “Shinar” or “Babylon”!

At that time Babylon will no longer be the Mistress of the World, the admiration of Kingdoms. Judgment is coming upon Babylon! God thunders, “And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath” (Rev.17:19). And an angel will descend from heaven, crying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen [twice – once in ancient times, and once at the End of this age!], and has become a dwelling place of demons, a PRISON for every foul spirit, and a CAGE for every unclean and hated bird!” (Rev.18:1-2).

This is the great Hypocritical Church – the Babylonian “Mystery” Religion which encompasses the earth! The evil woman is called “Wickedness.” This word is the original equivalent, in Hebrew, to “the Mystery of Iniquity,” or “Lawlessness,” spoken of

by the apostle Paul. “For the *mystery of lawlessness* is already at work,” he wrote to the Thessalonians (II Thess.2:7).

The Fate of the Daughter of Babylon

The “two women” of Zechariah therefore represent repentant and restored Israel and Judah who will be used by God to JUDGE and displace “Wickedness” – the Babylonian idolatrous and iniquitous “Mystery Religion” and “System” on the earth. They will make a “prison” for it in the land where it all originated in the time of Nimrod and Semiramis, after the Flood of Noah’s time – the land of “Shinar” [margin, “Babylon”, Zech.5:11).

God thunders, “Babylon shall become a heap, a dwelling place for jackals, an astonishment and a hissing, without an inhabitant” (Jeremiah 51:37). “For every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without inhabitant” (Jer.51:29).

“For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor when it is time to thresh her; *yet a little while* and the time of her harvest will come” (verse 33).

God will use the converted people of Israel, symbolized by the two women carrying the container of judgment holding the woman – the daughter of Babylon, the great false religion which will shortly rule the world together with the “Beast” or “Antichrist” – to put it all back where it belongs, where it came from.

The ephah is a Hebrew measure of dry weight, about a bushel or seven and one half gallons. The “ephah,” which they falsified, they made into an instrument of defrauding and deception. They replaced the truth with error; pure religion and undefiled with pagan filth, idolatry, harlotry, and deception. Even so, the “ephah” will be the symbol of their own judgment and condemnation!

Thus idolatry will be removed from God’s people, Israel, never more to return or take root again!

The two women are described as having storks’ wings. Their wings express power and velocity. The stork has long, wide wings, very powerful, and it is a migratory bird, which travels afar. Their lifting the “ephah” into the air, between heaven and earth, expresses open execution and punishment in the eyes of the whole world of mankind. The fate and punishment of the Babylonian Whore will be visible to all the world.

Thus wickedness will be cast out of God’s place, and sent back to lairs of hyenas and jackals, where it originated. There she will be imprisoned, unable to escape. The ‘ephah’ will be set down upon its own base, in its own place, and given up to everlasting destruction.

Malachi adds, “ ‘For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall BURN THEM UP,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘That will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name The Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall *trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the souls of your feet* on the day that I do this,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Mal.4:1-3).

The Lesson for Us

There is a great meaning in this prophecy for all of God’s people. It teaches us the certainty of reward and punishment. The wicked do not think of the coming punishment for their evil deeds, plans, plots, and conspiracies. They think they will get away with it – that God does not see or care about what they are doing.

But “he that has an ear, let him hear.” This is a serious WARNING to all of us. Don’t forsake the LAWS of God or treat them lightly, or fool around with them. Especially be very aware not to be a deceiving, fraudulent hypocrite, pretending to serve God and serving yourself instead! *Don’t be a hypocrite!*

And *don’t be a thief!* Don’t let temptation enter your heart. Be very careful not to become a THIEF – one who steals from others and even deigns to STEAL from Almighty God Himself, robbing His House of tithes and offerings!

The THIEF and the HYPOCRITE will both have their futures abruptly ended by the white-hot flames of Gehenna Fire! The apostle John wrote: “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, idolaters [“covetous” – see Col.3:5], and ALL LIARS shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev.21:8).

John declares, “BLESSED are those who DO His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter into the gates of the city” – the New Jerusalem (Rev.22:14). “But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever *loves and practices a lie*” (verse 15).

Says the *Critical, Experimental Commentary*, “We need to realize in thought all the terrors of the curse, in order that we may the more intensely desire and seek deliverance from it. If sinners would think of the awful curse hanging over their heads, and ready at any moment to descend with the rapidity of the lightning-flash, how gladly they would shelter themselves under the cross of Him who bore the curse for us, and so they would escape from the wrath to come! Dishonesty and perjury, and all neglect of the obligations which men owe to God, are a kind of deadly leprosy, which ‘remains in the midst of’ their ‘house.’ Sin brings with it a curse that must soon or late ‘consume’ sinners, with all their ill-gotten gains” (Jamieson, Faucett, Brown, *op. cit.*, page 676).

