

## ZECHARIAH: GOD'S PRESENT DIRECTIVES AND FUTURE HOPE

### VII: God's Judgment Of Israel's Individual Materialism

(Zechariah 5:1-4)

#### I. Introduction

- A. Zechariah along with Haggai called the returning Hebrews back to rebuilding the temple, and he gave God's directives and future hope. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the Book of Zechariah," p. 1310)
- B. The sixth vision in Zechariah 5:1-4 of a set of eight visions predicts God's judgment of Israel's individual materialism before the Millennial Kingdom. We view the passage for our insight, edification and application:

#### II. God's Judgment Of Israel's Individual Materialism, Zechariah 5:1-4.

- A. After giving five visions that predicted the encouraging blessings God would provide for His people Israel and the world of believers in the future Kingdom, the sixth vision shifts the focus to the sin that God must punish before providing His future Millennial Kingdom blessings. (Merrill F. Unger, Zechariah, 1974, p. 83)
- B. Thus, the sixth vision presented a very large, unrolled, flying scroll that measured twenty cubits by ten cubits, that is, 30 feet by 15 feet, the exact dimensions of the tabernacle in Israel's wilderness journeys, Zechariah 5:1-2; *Ibid.*, p. 85. The angel speaking with Zechariah explained that this scroll represented God's curse that was going forth over the whole land, that everyone who stole would be cut off in accord with what was written on one side of the scroll, and everyone who swore falsely would be cut off in accord with what was written on the scroll's other side, Zechariah 5:3 ESV. The Lord of hosts said that He would cause the scroll to enter into the house of the thief and him who swore falsely, and it would consume the house, including its timber and its stones that likely comprised the foundation and outer walls, Zechariah 5:4.
- C. To interpret this vision, we review the historical context that reveals the initial sinful situation that had temporarily halted the rebuilding effort of the temple (as follows):
  1. Haggai 1:1-4 exposed the sins behind the decision of the returned Hebrew exiles to cease rebuilding the temple, that they were building their own homes with luxurious, expensive timber instead of giving their finances and work to rebuild God's temple, and then they were asserting that "the time had not yet come for the temple of the Lord to be rebuilt." (*Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to Haggai 1:4; Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 955)
  2. Thus, the people were committing two sins: (a) They stole from God in devoting their income and work to build luxurious houses for themselves while neglecting the temple reconstruction, and they were (b) taking the Lord's name in vain by falsely asserting that it was not time for the "temple of the Lord" to be rebuilt.
  3. These sins violated the third commandment of the Ten Commandments that prohibited using God's name in vain in swearing and the eighth commandment that prohibited stealing, the false swearing ban being located in the middle of the first half and the stealing ban being located in the middle of the last half of the Ten Commandments, *Ibid.*, Unger, p. 87-88. The scroll, its measurements recalling God's initial house, the tabernacle, had one ban written on one side of the scroll and the other ban on its other side though a scroll was normally written on only one side, what signified the fulness of God's wrath against these sins!
  4. Thus, God would punish these sins that had obstructed the rebuilding of His temple in Zechariah's era before the installation of the Millennial Kingdom. The flying scroll, representing God's authoritative Word, would enter into the houses of the thieves and false swearers and destroy their luxuriously paneled homes, including the stones they had built up presumably for the foundations and outer walls! Thus, the investments the people had made in their homes instead of God's temple would be utterly destroyed!
- D. Accordingly, though the people of Israel had gone into captivity as an agricultural society, they had adopted the commercial influence of greed in ancient Babylon, so they had returned from captivity with the vice of greed in the form of materialism. This sin had to be punished and overcome before God could institute His Millennial Kingdom blessings, for greed is itself a form of idolatry, cf. Colossians 3:5b; *Ibid.*, p. 91.

***Lesson:*** *Though God promised His people wonderful blessings in the coming Kingdom, He had to purge them of sin before He could provide those blessings, a purging that would rid His people of the idolatry of materialism that they had brought with them from Babylon and that had initially hindered the rebuilding of God's temple.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we be satisfied with having our livelihood needs met and not try to be rich as a goal in itself, that we avoid materialism, 1 Timothy 6:6-11. (2) May we value the discipling of people above earthly possessions as taught in Matthew 13:44-46, 51-52. (3) If God arranges for us to become wealthy, may we heed 1 Timothy 6:17-19 humbly to trust in God and not in our wealth, and be ready to give of our bounty to worthy needs as God directs.*