

Zechariah 5:1–11

God’s Judgment on Sin and Corrupt Systems

Zechariah 5 contains two more visions. Both of them picture God’s judgment—not only on individual sins like lying and stealing, but also on entrenched systems of wickedness, especially corrupt commerce and exploitation.

These visions can feel strange, but their message is clear:
God sees, God remembers, and God will deal with sin.

1. The Flying Scroll: God’s Curse on Personal Sin (Zechariah 5:1–4)

Zechariah writes:

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 ten cubits.”

The scroll is large—about the size of the porch of Solomon’s temple. It is open and visible, flying across the sky, suggesting that what it declares is public and inescapable.

The angel explains:

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 one side of the scroll; and
every perjurer shall be expelled, according to the other side of it.”
“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 who swears falsely by My name.
It shall remain in the midst of his house
And consume it, with its timber and stones.”

Two sins are singled out:

- Stealing – taking what is not yours.
- Swearing falsely by God’s name – using His name to support lies, deceit, or false promises.

These represent dishonesty and covenant-breaking in both directions: toward people and toward God. The scroll, containing God’s curse, goes into the very house of the thief and the false swearer. It does not just brush past; it “remains” there and consumes the house “with its timber and stones.” In other words, sin corrodes everything—relationships, reputation, security, and even the structures we try to hide behind.

This first vision reminds us:

God’s moral law is not an opinion or suggestion. Sin has consequences, and God will not forever ignore lies, injustice, and hidden corruption.

2. The Ephah and the Woman: God's Judgment on Systemic Wickedness (Zechariah 5:5–11)

Zechariah then sees another vision:

Then the 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 that is going forth.”

He also said, “This is their resemblance throughout the earth.”

The “basket” is an ephah, a common measure used in trade—roughly the size of a large container similar to a bushel. It is a symbol of commerce, business, buying, and selling.

Zechariah continues:

Here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket”; then he said, “This is Wickedness!”

And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth.

The woman in the basket is called “Wickedness.” This is not a comment on women as such, but a personification of evil. She is associated with the ephah, the commercial measure, suggesting a corrupt economic system—dishonest scales, greedy profits, exploitation, and trade that disregards the dignity of human beings.

She is pushed down and sealed with a heavy lead cover. This shows God's control over wickedness; it will not roam forever unchecked.

Then Zechariah sees something even stranger:

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 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.”

The “land of Shinar” is another name for Babylon—the region where organized rebellion against God had a prominent history (as in the tower of Babel). Here, wickedness, especially corrupt commerce, is pictured as having a “home base” there. It is given a house, a center, a system.

The message is sobering:

Wickedness does not only show up in individual acts; it can be built into structures, cities, and economic systems. Nations, markets, and cultures can normalize greed, injustice, and deceit.

At the same time, the fact that God names it, locates it, and seals it tells us that He is not helpless before it. He knows where it dwells, and He will deal with it in His time. Later prophecies, such as Revelation 18, echo this theme when God judges a corrupt commercial system that has exploited and enslaved people for profit.

Practical Application

1. **God takes personal integrity seriously.**

The flying scroll reminds us that God sees what happens behind closed doors—our business practices, our words, our promises, our treatment of others. Theft and deceit may seem small to us at times, but God calls them out and warns of their destructive power.

2. **Sin has a way of “living in the house.”**

Notice that the curse “enters the house” and remains there. Similarly, if we tolerate hidden sin, it works like dry rot in the structure of our lives. Over time, it can damage our families, our reputations, and our peace.

3. **Wickedness can be embedded in systems, not just individuals.**

The ephah and the woman called “Wickedness” show that evil can become organized and institutionalized. Business, media, politics, and culture can all reflect values that oppose the heart of God—using people, loving money, and ignoring justice.

4. **God will ultimately confront and remove all wickedness.**

Wickedness is not permanent. God will not leave it in place forever. Both individual sin and systemic injustice will one day face His righteous judgment.

A Challenge for Believers

- Are there areas of dishonesty in your life—financial corners cut, promises made lightly, words used to impress or manipulate rather than to reflect truth?
- Have you allowed a “small” compromise to live in your house—on your screens, in your habits, in your thoughts—thinking it will not do much harm?
- Have you become comfortable with systems of injustice or greed because they benefit you, rather than asking how God views them?

God calls His people to be different:

- To walk in integrity, even when it costs.
- To confess and forsake hidden sin instead of hiding it.
- To refuse to let our hearts be shaped by a world that prizes profit at any cost and truth only when convenient.

Let this chapter prompt you to invite God to search your life. If He puts His finger on something, respond quickly. Repentance is not just for the day you first believed; it is a way of life for those who want to walk closely with Him.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

The visions of Zechariah 5 reveal a sober truth:

God takes sin seriously—both personal and societal. He will not ignore theft, lies, oppression, or rebellion. There is a real judgment coming.

But God's purpose in revealing judgment is not to push you away; it is to wake you up and draw you to His mercy.

On our own, we cannot erase our guilt. We have all broken God's commands in one way or another. Yet God, in His love, sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world. He lived without sin, and then He willingly laid down His life for us.

Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross.

There, He took the judgment our sins deserve.

On the third day, He rose from the dead, and His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

Because of what He has done:

- Your past can be forgiven.
- Your conscience can be cleansed.
- Your life can be made new from the inside out.

You cannot save yourself by good works, religion, or self-improvement. You need what only Jesus can give—a new heart and a clean record before God.

Today, you can respond to Him:

- Admit honestly that you are a sinner and cannot make yourself right with God.
- Believe that Jesus died on the cross for your sins and rose again.
- Ask Him, in your own words, to forgive you, change you, and take His rightful place as Lord of your life.

If you come to Him, He will not turn you away.

The same God who warns of judgment in Zechariah 5 is the God who offers mercy through His Son.

Today can be the day you move from living under the shadow of the curse to living under the grace of Jesus Christ.