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Flying Scrolls and Baskets: A Vision of Today — Part I

By Wilfred Hahn

Remarkable for such a short chapter of only 11 verses, Zechariah 5 contains two separate but important visions of the endtimes. This text contains the 6th and 7th visions given to the prophet Zechariah. We first read of a giant scroll that is levitating in the air (verses 1-4). Right after this, the angel speaking to Zechariah shows him another vision. We then see a strange picture of an ephah (measuring basket) being carried by two women with the wings of storks. What do these visions mean?



The vision of the ephah is relatively clear in its meaning (see *MCM* "Zechariah's Basket: A Vision of Today?," July 2004). However, the meaning of the first picture of a flying scroll has been most problematic. While a few expositors have drawn out some meaningful perspectives (i.e. relating its significance to the Ten Commandments as did J. Vernon McGee), I have yet to encounter an interpretation of this vision that meets a common sense, literal fit with all of its criteria. Attempts at deciphering this

flying scroll have surely resulted in some very imaginative interpretations...and not just among lay people!

One Bible historian sees a modern-day satellite revolving around the earth. He argues that this large scroll is descriptive of a large cylindrical object that is flying in the air. Others are convinced that the scroll is really an ancient attempt at explaining a modern-day intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) or is the representation of a binary code that underpins futuristic computers and information technology.



However, there is a very important clue that these more extreme interpretations overlook. The angel speaking to Zechariah reveals that the two visions are in fact linked. They must be taken together, any interpretation applying to both.

If we follow the literal, common sense meanings of this text, we discover yet another prophecy that uniquely applies to the times in which we live today. Moreover, such an interpretation also offers a compelling perspective to the heavily debated question of a future revived city of Babylon. Will there be a rebuilt Babylon or not? The evidence in Zechariah 5 is rather clear, though mostly overlooked.

The Two Visions Connected

In tackling this important chapter, we must pursue somewhat of a circuitous route. This stems from the two “unlocking” keys provided in this chapter. Let’s review each of the visions as we first draw out these important keys, starting with the first:

Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it. I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall



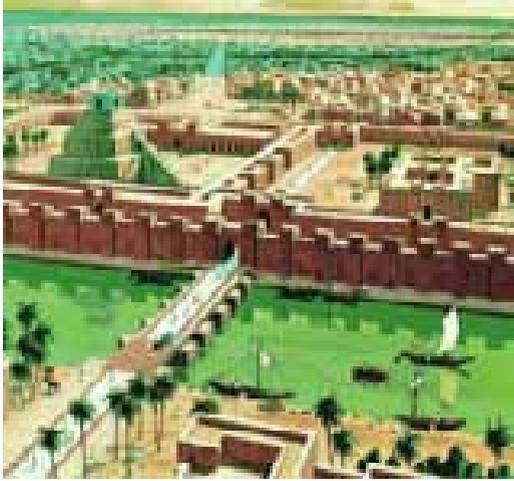
consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof (Zechariah 5:1-4, KJV).

Just what does this scroll represent? It “enters” houses, it flies, consumes timbers and it is inordinately large. Most would agree that in only reading these four verses one is left perplexed and wondering. There simply are not many clues given that allow us to put this vision into its intended framework and prophetic timeframe. We, therefore, must read further:

Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the an-

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gel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base (verses 5-11, KJV).

Before delving into the meaning of this vision, we want to isolate the first of the key clues, which is found in verse 6 and says that the wickedness in the ephah is “their resemblance through all the earth.” To who is “their” referring? The Amplified Bible brings out this point more clearly.

And I said, What is it? [What does it symbolize?] And he said, ‘This that goes forth is an ephah [-sized vessel for separate grains all collected together]. This, he continued, is the symbol of the sinners mentioned above and is the resemblance of their iniquity throughout the whole land (Zechariah 5:6. AMP).

Who are the “sinners” said to be “mentioned above”? They are the very same that either “swearth falsely” or “stealeth”: the two groups that are listed on opposite sides of the opened scroll in the first vision. We will come back to these two groups of people as we delve into the details of this vision more closely. However, for now, we have found the first of the important keys to this chapter. The two visions

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are clearly linked. Therefore, understanding the second vision is first necessary before approaching the first vision.

The second key to which we must draw our attention is also clear and logical. As one vision follows the other, the sequence of the two prophetic visions is therefore significant. In other words, it will make sense that the events surrounding the second vision will follow that of the first, especially so as both are related.

Holding on to these two keys, we can now launch our investigation into the meaning of these two visions. However, we need to start in reverse by examining the second vision first. Then proceeding, we can examine the first. Finally, that will lead us to the conclusion, which is the logical follow-through to the order of the two visions. Here, it speaks about judgment and something being relocated to Shinar, an area inside today's Iraq. Just what is being moved, and to where? As did Zechariah, we will have to leave these answers to the conclusion.

The Ephah Explained

The ephah that Zechariah saw lifted up toward heaven — shown with a lid of lead upon it to contain the iniquity — was a commercial measuring unit for dry goods. It is the approximate equivalent of about 8-9 bushels today. This unit of measure is mentioned more than twice as much as any other in the Bible (the hin, the homer or the seah, for example). Clearly, it was the key unit of commerce during the prophet's time, both for measurement and transport. If Zechariah's vision had been given in our day, God may have used the symbol of a 20-foot shipping container (the type that is transported on ocean-



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going ships and tractor trailers) or perhaps even a No. 10 cardboard box. Clearly, the ephah here is being used as the symbol for trade and commerce.

Yet, more than this is being symbolized in this vision. More expressly, it indicts the iniquity and idolatry associated with commercialism — a worldwide orgy of commercialism, as we will yet show. The woman figure contained in the ephah speaks of idolatry or unfaithfulness as is often symbolized in the female form in prophetic language. All in all, it is a grave allegation. “This is wickedness,” says the angel in no uncertain terms (verse 8).

But, can we at this point determine the general time period during which the prophecies of Zechariah 5 play out? We can conclude that it definitely refers to the last days, most likely the Tribulation Period and the worldwide developments leading to this condition. Involved here is a global application and a divine intervention. Such apocalyptic events do not occur in prophecy until the 70th week or thereabout. Specifically the vision of the ephah being transported arguably applies to that time that the millennium period begins. Several more factors line up with this interpretation, which we will yet review.

Now that we have the correct framework, timeframe, and sequence, the meaning of the first vision unfolds. We

are now ready to examine this vision. And, as we will see, doing so provides further proofs for our interpretation of the second. Most of all, we must remember that we are dealing with the massive idolatry of commercialism in the last days.

The Flying Scroll: What is it?

What a strange sight — a flying scroll levitating in mid air. Yet, Zechariah mentions two times that he sees a flying scroll.

Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits (Zechariah 5:1-2, KJV).

The scroll seen here is surely one of odd size. Converting its dimensions into the measures of our day, it is approximately 30 feet wide and 15 feet high. It is visible as an open book ... an open ledger of record. As most scrolls of that day, writing was on both sides. Zechariah says twice that the flying object that he saw was a scroll with writing on both sides. The writing could be clearly seen. Therefore, it was unfurled, rather than being rolled up. The Bible uses two Hebrew words for literary documents, *megillah* (used here) and *siphrah*. Both mean a type of document that can be rolled up into a roll. If God meant us to understand that it was to pre-

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Yet this scroll is very large, much larger than could be handled by a single reader. It floats in the air as if a banner for all to see across the whole world ... having application to “the face of the whole earth.” The Bible says that it is a scroll, which is a record-keeping device for all the world to see. It is a marquee, announcing a curse and a final judgment.

“Then said he unto me, ‘This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth’ [...]” (verse 3a).

A Banner Proclaiming a Worldwide Curse

The scroll represents a curse that applies to the whole world. Why a curse? As the Bible shows, a curse is always the result of forsaking God’s ordinances. For example, referring to the Hebrews: “If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honor my name,” says the LORD Almighty, I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not set your heart to honor me” (Malachi 2:2).

The book of Deuteronomy lists numerous curses that would befall Israel if they

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departed from the commands given to them by Moses. Joshua summed them up. He “[...] read all the words of the law — the blessings and the curses — just as it is written in the Book of the Law” (Joshua 8:34).

However, Isaiah mentions a curse that applies not just to Israel, but the whole world:

The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left (Isaiah 24:3-6, KJV).

There is an argument to be made that this curse applying to the whole world is in fact linked to the curse we are now examining in Zechariah. In this case, why is a curse being pronounced?

The Bible tells us clearly: “[...] for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it” (verse 3). Therefore, both those that steal and those that swear falsely are being cut off and cursed. This answer only serves to trigger another important question: Why is the world being judged for these two sins? Aren't there 10 commandments?

The Ills of Swearing and Stealing

What is clearly peculiar is that only two of the 10 commandments — the 4th and 8th

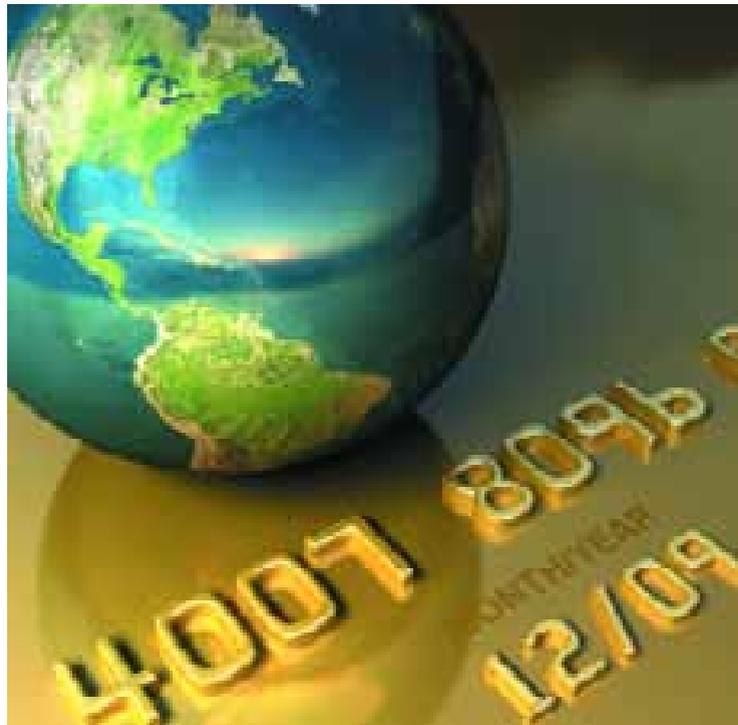


— are mentioned as the cause of the curse upon the whole world (that being misusing the Lord's name and stealing). It could be argued that the 9th commandment, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” is also involved (Exodus 20:16).

Whatever the case, why are only three sins mentioned at most? Because the breaking of the other commandments is not directly involved. That is another important clue. However, at this point, we must again recall the first clue — that the vision of the scroll is linked to the ephah of the second vision.

We therefore can know that the false witness and the stealing being mentioned has to do with the idolatrous commercialism of the last days pointed out in the second vision. Pinpointed are the two sins that are mainly responsible for the filthy idolatry that was shown in the flying ephah — the last-day semblance of manmade prosperity, the religion of greed, the intoxicating wine of Babylon the Great mentioned in Revelation 18, the human quest for the actualization of man on earth through the economics of satiating people's physical and materialistic wants.

In no uncertain terms, we are seeing here the endemic commercialization and financialization of all human life on earth of the last days. Rampant globalization today is surely part of this picture ... whether in its earlier or later stages. Encompassed here is everything from the elevation of manipulative and global monetary systems, fiat money, capitalism, globalism based on the vested interest of intertwined world-wide



trading systems, accounting shenanigans, corporatism and debt-based wealth. All together it represents that heaving mass of Mammonism — a world that has chosen money over God.

The corrosiveness and imbalances of these systems are literally consuming “the timber thereof and the stones thereof” (Zechariah 5:4) — symbolizing the structural integrity of man's globalized foundation. For such systems to prosper — prospering here meaning nothing more than giving the semblance of success, though its underpinnings are deceitful and not sustainable — they depend upon two impulses alone. What are these? To no surprise, the very two sins of stealing and false witness.

Swearing Falsely and Stealing Up Close

To understand the linkage of these two sins more closely with Zechariah's second vision, let's examine them more closely beginning with swearing falsely. Swearing here means to take an oath, or to promise some-

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thing. The actual translation of the Hebrew word is to “seven one self” ... in other words, to enter into contract or declaration by saying it seven times. The issue here has to do with “swearing falsely by my name” (verse 4, KJV). Therefore, this first wicked condition has to do with lying, perjury, deceit — misusing the Lord's name. It concerns the issue of making a promise without intending to fulfill it.

But how is it that the Lord's name is involved? Well, it must be. After all, “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind” (Numbers 23:19). He is the God of truth (Psalm 31:5, 33:4). Every man may be a liar, but God is true (Romans 3:4). The Bible clearly tells us that

God is the personification of truth. Therefore, to swear falsely in the name of truth, is to “swearth falsely by my name” (Zechariah 5:4).

Actually, this type of lying — in other words, swearing falsely in the name of truth — is the glue of our world's economic and geopolitical systems. At the highest levels, it is mirrored in the institution of contract law. On the one hand, legions of lawyers are required to establish a rigid framework for world commerce to function. Of course, this wouldn't be required in the first case, were there not so many false promises. In fact, for a long time the common law system has included the practice of asking deponents and witnesses to swear upon the Bible, “that they will tell nothing but the truth.”

Most contracts today are made entirely on the premise of what is legally allowable as opposed to what is right, moral and a true promise. All that is required to get out of one's obligation is a simple loophole. It is as easy as that for the most part ... nothing more than a façade of truth.

The same attitude applies to the world of competitive geopolitics. The “lie” is the most deftly used technique in the pursuit of nations' interests. The lying and deceit definitely defines the modus operandi of the entire world today. Christ warned of this murky quagmire of “swearing.” “Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one” (Matthew 5:37). ☞