

Zechariah 5:1-11 – The Scroll and the Basket

The first four chapters of Zechariah contain the first 5 of 8 visions. The first three visions communicated that God would judge those who harmed Israel, that God would protect and dwell with the people of Israel and that Jerusalem would prosper. The fourth vision was about Joshua the high priest and one called the Branch. The fifth vision was about Zerubbabel and the completion of the temple. Chapter 5 contains visions 6 and 7.

Read Zechariah 5:1-5.

What did Zechariah see in the 6th vision? What would normally be on a scroll? What was unique about this scroll? Anthony R. Petterson summarizes some of the possible meanings of a flying scroll. It could represent “notions of swiftness, omnipresence or imminence”. It is clearly of divine and not human origin. (5:1)

Verse 2 starts with “And he said to me”. Who does “he” refer to? See 4:1 and 5:5. Zechariah was asked to describe what he saw. He mentioned the flying scroll but added a detail. What was the additional detail? How big is 20 x 10 cubits? What was the significance of the size of the scroll? An unrolled scroll could be 20 cubits long but a normal scroll would definitely not be 10 cubits high. (5:2)

In verse 3, what was the explanation of the scroll? The “whole land” seems to be best understood as the land of Judah. Based on this verse, what do you think was written on the scroll? What two commands were called out? ESV has “cleaned out” as the consequence for those who disobey God’s law. KJV has “cut off”. NASB has “purged away”. NIV has “banished”. Petterson suggests that a better translation is “[wrongly] acquitted”. The idea is that previously these sins were not punished. Mark J. Boda has a similar take on the correct translation and meaning. This vision indicates that God will no longer tolerate unpunished sin in the land. There will be consequences. (5:3)

In verse 4 what did Yahweh of hosts declare? (5:4)

Read Zechariah 5:5-11.

Verses 5-11 contain the 7th vision. In verse 5, what did the interpreting angel tell Zechariah to do? (5:5)

In verse 6, how did Zechariah respond to the angel? This is different in that Zechariah did not seem to know what he was looking at. Usually Zechariah knew what he was looking at but then asked what the meaning was. (5:6)

How did the angel answer Zechariah? ESV and NIV have “basket”. KJV and NASB have “ephah”. Some translations combine the two with the translation “measuring basket”. An ephah was a measurement of about 7 gallons. It seems that Zechariah saw a container which measured an ephah. ESV and NIV have “iniquity”. KJV has “resemblance”. NASB has “appearance”. The ESV note indicates that all but one Hebrew manuscript has “eye” while one Hebrew manuscript and the Septuagint have “iniquity”. “Iniquity” fits with the previous vision and verse 8. But that could explain why a scribe would copy “eye” as “iniquity” since “eye” is difficult to interpret. The two words are similar in Hebrew. (5:6)

What was described in verse 7? ESV has “leaden cover”. KJV has “talent of lead”. NASB has “lead cover”. NIV has “cover of lead”. ESV, NASB and NIV all indicate that there was a lead cover on the container and that the cover was lifted to reveal the contents. “Cover” can also be translated “talent”, another unit of measure equal to about 75 to 95 pounds. Petterson believes that a lead image of a woman, weighing a talent, was lifted out of the basket. (5:7)

Based on verse 8, what did the woman represent? Note that the ESV preserves the difference between the “leaden cover” in verse 7 and the “leaden weight” of verse 8. NIV does not differentiate between the two even though they are different words. There is agreement that in verse 8 a lead weight or stone was put over the opening of the container to close it. The difference of the words gives support for Petterson’s view that the “talent of lead” is not a cover. (5:8)

In verse 9, what did Zechariah see? (5:9)

In verse 10, what did Zechariah ask the angel? (5:10)

What was the angel’s answer? Where is Shinar? What does Shinar represent? Contrast the building of the house in Shinar with the building of the temple in Jerusalem. What is the meaning of this vision? (5:11)