

leadership of the high priest Joshua and the governor Zerubbabel--both of whom prefigured the future priestly and kingly ministries of the coming Messiah. The visions that follow after these continue to speak comfort to Zion--but in quite a different manner than the ones that came before them.

Visions six through eight assure Zion that God has not changed in His essential character and purpose against the backdrop of an unbelieving world. It may be true that men think that God can be "mocked"; and that they won't "reap" what the "sow" (Galatians 6:7). But God will always remain the same. His standards of holiness will not be set aside. He will remove sin from His people, and establish His kingdom as a holy one. As Dr. Charles Feinberg writes, "Before these prophecies can be fulfilled in the nation, there must be the righteous judgment of God upon all sinners and all transgression. This rightly presupposes what is elsewhere in Scripture stated positively: before the blessings of the first five visions will be actualized, there will intervene in the life of the nation a period of moral declension and apostasy. God must and will purge out all iniquity, though He has promised untold glory for the godly of Israel" (Charles L. Feinberg, *God Remembers* [Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1979], p. 65.)

This sixth vision establishes that, in all that God will do in grace for His people, He will nevertheless judge and remove sin from their midst.

I. THE VISION DESCRIBED (vv. 1-3).

We're told that Zechariah "turned and raised" his eyes. This clearly indicates an end of the previous vision and the beginning of a new one. But the fact that it involved a "turning" (or as it's translated in the NIV, "I looked again") may be meant to indicate a complete change in mood and focus. The mood of the visions now change from one of comfort to His faithful people, to promise of judgment on those who are unfaithful and rebellious. What Zechariah saw in this vision required that he "raised" his eyes--because he saw an enormous "scroll" flying, perhaps in the sky above him. He is asked (probably by the interpreting angel that we've encountered elsewhere in this prophecy) what it is that he sees. Note carefully how he goes on to describe . . .

- A. Its action. It's said to be flying. Other "scrolls" described in other visions in Scripture appear to be transferred by hand (see Ezekiel 2:9; Revelation 10:10). But this book is shown to be flying to its destination, which would seem to illustrate both the swiftness of the coming-about of the things that it says and the inability of men to prevent it. As the apostle Paul once said, "but the word of God is not chained" (2 Timothy 2:9). It freely goes where God sends it and accomplishes what He purposes for it without hindrance (see Isaiah 55:11).
- B. Its dimensions. It's described in enormous proportions--not at all the size we would normally expect a scroll to be. Zechariah said, "Its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits." If a cubit is figured as the length of a man's arm (i.e., approximately 18"), then this scroll would be a remarkable thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide. These dimensions are significant because, as several commentators point out, they are the dimensions of the porch in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:3), and conform to the dimensions of the Holy Place of the tabernacle (Exodus 26:15-25). The suggestion is, then, that this flying scroll is to be seen in close association with the temple--the place where relationship between God and His covenant people was centered. The implication would be that God's judgment--figured in this flying scroll--is measured, not by man's standards, but by those of a holy God. "For the LORD is the God of knowledge; and by Him actions are weighed" (1 Samuel 2:3a).

- C. Its fullness. It is said to be written on both sides; since "‘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). In Revelation 5:1, we're told of "a scroll written inside and on the back", which only "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" was qualified to open. The abundance of the writing on it--that is, on both front and back--seems to suggest a thoroughness of judgment. Nothing is missed in God's work of judgment!
- D. Its association. In verse 3, we're told, "This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth . . ." This probably has reference, in the broad sense, to the fact that "[c]ursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them" (Galatians 3:10; see also Deuteronomy 27:26). But two sins are particularly specified--that of "theft", which is the middle commandment of the second table of the law that governs man's relation to his fellow man (see Exodus 20:15), and perjury (or swearing falsely by God's name), which is the middle commandment of the first table of the law that governs man's relation to God (see Exodus 20:7). In view of this, it may be that the scroll is representing the curse for breaking the whole of the whole of the ten commandments as represented by the two tables of the law--which our Lord summarized for us as loving God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind; and loving our neighbor as ourself (see Matthew 22:37-40).
- E. Its destination. This flying scroll--representing, as it does, the curse that accompanies the breaking of God's law--is said to "go out over the face of the whole earth" (as in the New King James Version). The "face of the whole earth" is the inhabitable realm of man; and if this is the correct translation, than the curse for breaking God's law is said to "intrude", if we may put it this way, into the whole realm in which rebellious man thinks himself to be sovereign and free from the demands of God's law. But the word translated "earth" can also be translated "land" (as it is in the New International Version; "over the whole land"); and if this is the correct translation, then the destination of this scroll would be specifically the land of Israel. Dr. Feinberg argues for the correct interpretation being that of the specific land of Judah: "(1) because of the land of Judah only could it be affirmed that they swore in the name of Jehovah (v. 4); (2) because in verse 11 [the seventh vision being seen in close association with the sixth] the land is distinctly contrasted with the land of Shinar [i.e., Babylon]; and (3) because the reference to the two tables of the law restricts the curse primarily to those under the law" (pp. 67-8). In either case, it's made plain that man cannot escape the curse that comes from breaking God's law.
- F. Its result. The judgment of God is complete and specific. "‘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). The 'expulsion' (*nāqâ* = to be clear, free, innocent, cut off; "banished" in the NIV; "cleaned out" in the ESV; "purged away" in the NASB), when seen in the light of verse 4, signifies a complete removal. The fact that it is written on a scroll speaks of the permanency of its remembrance and the certainty of its fulfillment. As Jesus Himself has said, "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

II. THE VISION APPLIED (v. 4).

All that is told to us of this flying scroll helps us to appreciate the impact of verse 4; and makes it, as the commentator David Baron wrote, "one of the most solemn in the whole Bible, as showing what an awful thing it is to come under God's curse against sin" (David Baron,

Zechariah: A Commentary on His Prophecies And Visions [Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, n.d.], p. 149).

- A. The curse is certain in its coming. "I will send out the curse', says the LORD of hosts . . ." The curse is not merely suggested by God and made to be accomplished by man. The curse for sin is itself both intended and sent out by God Himself. No mere man should himself exempt.
- B. The curse will be specific in its application. "It shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name." God is not reckless or half-hazard in His judgment; but He truly judges each according to his works
- C. The curse will be thorough in its results. "It shall remain in the midst of his house and consume it, with its timber and stones." A man will find that even his house--in which he thinks himself to be a law unto himself, and free to choose whether or not he will honor God's law--is itself inhabited by and infused with the all-pervasive curse that accompanies the breaking the law of God. The flying scroll of the curse cannot be locked out; and it will even take residence in the very stones and timbers until it completely consumes it.

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This had specific application to the Jewish people who were returning from their captivity in Babylon. But it has a general application to all people at all times; and will be particularly applicable at the time when the Lord Jesus returns to set up His physical reign on earth. All men who live in a hard-hearted and impenitent way before God will prove to be, as Paul says,

treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "will render to each one according to his deeds": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness--indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God (Romans 2:5-11).

God is a holy God; and in accordance with His nature, He must--and He will--purge away sin! How important, then, that--in the face of this curse, and the judgment it promises--that we be among those Paul spoke of when he wrote, "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 5:10).