

Zechariah 5:1-4

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[0:00] And that brings us to the next vision, the sixth vision. And this sixth vision, I was tempted to do the sixth and the seventh visions together! because they are so closely linked.

But I ran out of time and words, and so we're going to do one vision today and the other one next week. But keep in your minds that these visions are inextricably linked.

They have a common thread that is very, very important. And what we see as we deal with the sixth vision is a complete change of emphasis. Up to now, the visions have all been consoling and comforting to Israel.

They've all been promising great things to Israel, that it would be prospered, that it would be populous, that God's blessing would be present in huge amounts in Israel.

And by the way, if you're here and you happen to think that God's finished with Israel, think again. Because we're reading about stuff that God has promised for Israel that hasn't yet happened. And so Israel is still very much in God's gun sights.

[1:15] More of that in future studies. So, let's read, and then we'll continue talking about it.

Turn to Zechariah chapter 5. And we're only going to read the first four verses. But my, there's some meat in these verses. So, Zechariah is writing, and he is speaking, and he says, Then I lifted up my eyes again, and looked, and behold, there was a flying scroll.

And he said to me, What do you see? And I answered, I see a flying scroll. Its length is 20 cubits, and its width 10 cubits. Then he said to me, This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land.

Surely everyone who steals will be purged away, according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears will be purged away, according to the writing on the other side.

I will make it go forth, declares the Lord of hosts, and I will enter the house of the thief, and the house of the one who swears falsely by my name, and it will spend the night within that house, and consume it with its timber and stones.

[2:31] So, the change of emphasis, we've gone from comfort and nice things, to I am going to judge sin, and I'm going to judge it strongly and powerfully.

Scholars have arguments over the context of this passage, because they say it's directed entirely at Israel. But what we just read was, it's going forth over the whole earth.

And the word used is the word *eretz*, which means the earth, the big ball of dirt that we live on. It's not limited to Israel. So, I don't agree with the contextual argument that this only relates to Israel.

It also makes more sense when you get into the next vision, to include the whole earth. But the one thing we can deduce from it, is that it starts with Israel. And in the New Testament, we read that judgment begins at the household of God, which is Israel, and particularly Jerusalem, which is where God's house is, the temple is.

So, judgment's going to start with Israel, but that's not where it's going to end. And we do see that. We've seen it right through history. When Israel has got to a place where it's at odds with God, God brings the hand of discipline on them, and often uses their enemies to subdue them and discipline them until they turn and repent.

[3:59] So, it's a common feature of the way God deals with his people. Could I have a picture of the scroll? So, artist's impression.

There we go. So, artist's impression of a flying scroll. The reason I put the picture up, because you can all imagine this in your mind's eye anyway, you know what a scroll looks like.

This scroll, we're going to read, was written on both sides. So, the one that's on the screen isn't written on both sides, because there's no writing here.

But I couldn't find one that depicted it written on both sides. But there is a point to why it's important that it's written on both sides, which I'll come to in a moment.

But Zechariah sees this flying scroll, and it must be completely unrolled, because he says it's 20 cubits, which is 30 feet long.

[5:03] So, it's perhaps longer than this room. I haven't measured this room, but 30 feet is a good length, 10 meters. And 10 cubits wide, 15 feet wide.

This is a massive document, written on both sides. And so, the first thing we need to work out, and, you know, these enigmatic passages, when I'm studying to teach on these sermons, there are times when I say, Lord, why did you make it so hard?

And by the time I get to the end of it, I'm saying, Lord, thank you for making it so hard, because it makes you dig. So, generally speaking, any, well, in fact, not even generally speaking, entirely within the scriptures, it only refers to scrolls as, in some way, being the word of God.

There aren't lots and lots of references to other scrolls, or even other writings. The scrolls are almost always the word of God.

And quite often, the use of the description of scroll incorporates something more than just the, I don't know what it would be, papyrus, or maybe leather, or, but whatever it's made of, vellum, whatever it's made of, it's not just talking about the material, but it's talking about what people do with the scroll.

[6:33] So, if you turn to Psalm 40, and in verse 7, now this is a messianic psalm, so in other words, it's a psalm that speaks of Messiah to come.

And in verse 7, actually start with verse 6, the Lord is saying, sacrifice and meal offerings you have not desired, my ears you have opened, burnt offerings and sin offering you have not required.

Then I said, behold, I come, in the scroll of the book it is written of me. And some of your Bibles will say, in the volume of the book it is written of me.

But it means the entire scroll is written of me. And this is Jesus speaking through the Psalms to say, this book is about me. And you will know from our previous studies that whichever book you're in in the Bible, you can find direct references to Messiah to come.

Jesus is all over the Old Testament, which I'm so glad about, because as a result of that, quite a lot of Jews get saved from the Old Testament, not the New. Makes you think, doesn't it, when there are whole groups of people that say we shouldn't even be reading the Old Testament now, because we're in New Testament times.

[7:50] How mad is that? So, he says, behold, I come. And in the scroll or the volume of the book it is written of me.

And it goes on to say, I delight to do your will, O God. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when he was sweating drops of blood, he said, not my will, but yours be done.

And we read in Hebrews, it was for the joy that was set before him that he endured the cross, despising its shame. So, the scroll not only refers to the Word of God, but the Word of God refers entirely to Jesus.

And of course, in John chapter 1, we read that he was the living Word. In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God.

So, the scroll here is referring to Jesus. And I've kind of gone the long way around the bound to get to that, but we need to make these connections, otherwise it doesn't make sense.

[8:57] So, the scroll, and it's wide open here, it's 30 foot long and 15 foot wide and it's all unraveled. If we turn to Jeremiah 36, and we're going to read verses 2, 4 and 6.

And this is where Jeremiah's scroll is read in the temple. And in verse 1, it says, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, take a scroll and write on it all the words which I have spoken to you concerning Israel and concerning Judah and concerning all the nations from the day I first spoke to you from the days of Josiah even to this day.

In verse 4, it says, then Jeremiah called Baruch, the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on the scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words that the Lord, of the Lord, which he had spoken to him.

And then in verse 6, so you go and read from the scroll which you have written at my dictation the words of the Lord to the people in the Lord's house on the fast day and also you shall read them to all the people of Judah who come from their cities.

So, long-standing tradition that the word of God was written in scrolls and the scrolls were then read to the people, most of whom would have been illiterate. People didn't have scrolls lying around their

houses like we have Bibles.

[10 : 29] Another major difference is the scrolls in those days used to get read to the people whereas a lot of us have Bibles lying around our houses that don't even get open they just gather dust.

Let's hope that's not the case here. But what you can see is the use of scrolls to give out God's word and to infest the people with God's word.

Being written down by the prophets as it's dictated. You do look at some scriptures and think how did that happen? You know, Psalm 23. The Lord, the Lord, is my shepherd, is my shepherd.

I don't think so somehow. I think it was something more revelatory than that. But, in the case of the scroll of Jeremiah it was dictated to him we've just read.

Turn then to Ezekiel 3 which is a few books to the right. And just verses 1 to 3. Then he said to me, Son of man, eat what you find.

[11 : 37] Eat this scroll and go and speak to the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth and he fed me the scroll. And he said to me, Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you.

Then I ate it and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. And I'm not going to read on there but the point is that the point of the scroll is that its content will be entirely consumed by the person reading it.

And this analogy of actually chewing on it and swallowing it is, for us, it's a symbolism. whether it was symbolic for Ezekiel or whether he actually chewed on the manuscript, I really have no idea. But it's certainly something we should take on as a picture that God doesn't want us to read his word superficially. He doesn't want us to just read the titles and not take in the text or what he wants us to do is to take it off the page and imprint it on the human heart which is a principle you will find in Jeremiah chapter 31 beginning at verse 31 that he is making a new covenant with the house of Israel and he is going to take his word and write it on people's hearts.

So for the scroll to have an effect it needs to be written on the heart is the point. Turn to Luke 4 and in Luke 4 what we realise too because what we've been reading about in Zechariah was about 520 BC or as some would have it BCE which I don't agree with at all because it's not before a common era it's before Christ there's never an opportunity missed to demote Christ and I think we should resist it but anyway that's another study verse 17 of Luke chapter 4 says it's where Jesus stands up in the temple so if you look at verse yeah verse 17 and the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him now the book if you've got an NASB version or any of the new versions it will say the book the manuscript says a scroll the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him and he opened the scroll now scrolls are awkward you imagine you've got two big rolls of stuff and you've got to unroll one and roll up the other till you find the bit you want to read and if you happen to be doing what I'm doing here

[14 : 24] I mean you see me struggle with a bible but if I had a scroll can you imagine how long it would take me to find each scripture reference because I'd have to and is it on the front of the scroll or is it on the back of the scroll it would be a nightmare and scholars have it that this is why we finished up with codices instead of scrolls because codices or codexes are books they have pages and it's easier to find your way through them but in this occasion that we're reading of he says verse 17 the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him and he opened the scroll and he found the place where it is written the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind to set free those who are oppressed to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and he closed the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down and the eyes all in the synagogue were fixed on him and he began to say to them today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing the scroll not only was the word of God but in what he said

Jesus identified himself as fulfilling what the scroll had said so the scroll was authoritative and it was also timeless it didn't run out Jesus was able to stand there hundreds of years later and say this scripture has just been fulfilled in your hearing so Zachariah is seeing a scroll and the scroll is God's word and it's God's word that is eternal the other thing is it's God's word that is complete the reason it's important that we take note of the fact that it was written on both sides is ordinarily if you wanted to write on the back side of a scroll you could do so and you would be adding to the content of the scroll but God's scroll is already complete there is no room to add anything to it it kind of nullifies all these arguments about should the gospel of Thomas be in the Bible and all of those

things because the scroll was complete and so this scroll that he's seeing 30 foot long 15 foot wide flying through the sky contains God's word for that time that is complete and irrevocable this bit about both sides first of all we see it affecting the whole earth it's going throughout the whole earth and its purpose is to tell people that a curse has been issued or possibly will be issued I think it's the former I think what's happened is they are at this point where so much devastation has been committed against the Jews that this is an inevitable judgment that's coming but I could be wrong about that and I'm not being dogmatic about it but let's examine one or two other things the scroll was said to be 20 cubits long and 10 cubits wide these proportions why these proportions why would that make Jews go oh I better look at this I better take notice what is it about those proportions if you turn with me to 1st Kings 6 1st Kings chapter 6 and you can also find this you can find it in one of the books of Chronicles and I haven't used that reference because you have to sit there and do sums to work it out you have to count the width of the boards and the number of boards and add them all up but 1 Kings 6 and verse 3 the porch in the front of the nave of the house was 20 cubits in length corresponding to the width of the house and its depth along the front of the house was 10 cubits so the proportion of the scroll was the same proportion as the porch of Solomon's temple and the porch of Solomon's temple was the place where the door was so this is where you entered

God's house so those proportions would have been significant shall we say Exodus 26 gives you dimensions for the tabernacle I am not going to do the sums here because we'll be here all morning but feel free to do them for yourself when you get home because all the ingredients are there I just I just decided there was no really a purpose in showing in going into that level of detail so 26 verse 15 and following you shall make the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood standing upright so these are standing upright they're around the walls okay each board one and a half cubits width so there shall be two tenons for each board fitted to one another thus you shall do for all the boards of the tabernacle you shall make the boards for the tabernacle 20 boards for the south side and you read on later 20 boards for the other side so 20 times one and a half is 30 so the holy place not the holy of holies different different room but the holy place in the temple was 20 by 10 and you can you can extract that from that passage if you do your sums so to the Jews receiving this prophecy there would have been a wake up moment gosh that's the same that scroll is the same dimensions as the holy place and later on that scroll is the same dimensions as Solomon's porch and so this scroll which has grabbed people's attention

I would think what we're told is that it's the curse that goes forth over the whole land Eretz arguably over the whole earth now Zechariah sees this scroll affecting the whole earth but he's in Israel at the time and he's dealing with the rebuilding of the temple so clearly it has impact in Israel and in the temple but it has a wider meaning I would say in 1 Peter 4 verses 17 and 18 Peter records the time has come for judgment to begin with or to begin from the house of God so I think we can assume that although it's addressed to the whole earth it's beginning at the house of God we've in the studies that we've done previously we have always inferred that from the scriptures that God always judges his own house first he always puts his own house in order first and that he continually tests us for our own good but in that in that passage in 1 Peter 4 it says if salvation is hard for the righteous how much harder will it be for the godless for people who give no glory no recognition and no submission to God see to those of us who are saved there's nothing left for us to do

[22:21] I mean if we step out of line we should be repentant but our salvation depends on the fact that we have put ourselves in his hands and it doesn't depend on anything else so I don't have to be really good it's no harm if I try to be really good but it's not nothing depends on me being really good God has done it because I responded to the scroll not because I'm great not because I'm perfect but because I responded to this scroll there's a very very important message behind this because if God is sending out a 30 foot by 20 foot scroll across the whole earth saying this is the curse that's coming against sinners he means business and unfortunately none of us can be good enough to avoid it so the only way we can avoid it is to be rescued from it which is what salvation is all about turn to

Romans 1 straight after the book of Acts the book of Romans a well-known passage the first book that Paul wrote and his I guess you'd say it was his magnum opus it was his great work and what we read in verse 18 it says for the wrath of God now the wrath of God is an awesome thing and I don't mean awesome in the sense that it's used in the modern vernacular where you hear a good

pop star and you say oh that was awesome this is it will strike awe into your heart you will be afraid the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness because that which is known about God is evident within them for God made it evident to them the vision of the scroll can you imagine being there when this thing goes past you'll be going what on earth is that but the point that's being made is that God has made himself and his will obvious to all not one of us has an excuse if we read on in Romans 1 it says for since the creation of the world his invisible attributes his eternal power and his divine nature have been clearly seen being understood through what has been made so that they are without excuse we are without excuse fortunately for me when I got saved I stopped making excuses because I realised it was pointless but his wrath is revealed against all unrighteousness and ungodliness particularly of those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness so one of the things that the scroll if you if you study it you will finish up with a passion for truth and no time whatsoever for untruth and lies now we're going to move on to the fact that if we go back to Zechariah we have in some ways quite a strange identification of what the curses are about and I'm hoping I can bring some clarity to this verse three this is the curse that is going forth over the whole face of the earth surely everyone who steals will be purged away and that purged away the Hebrew there literally means annihilated or got rid of or it's that kind of total destruction everyone who steals will be purged away according to the writing on one side and everyone who swears will be purged away according to the writing on the other side why only two of the Ten Commandments I'm so glad you asked it appears to isolate the third and the eighth of the Ten Commandments and doesn't give any space to the others and most scholars that deal with this passage do so in this way and

I believe they're right to do so however with all of these things where the Bible isn't absolutely clear you can't be dogmatic and I'm not being dogmatic but this is my understanding of it when God first set out his commandments he did so by writing them in stone and we still use that as a euphemism for these days don't we we say it's written in stone that is in other words you can depend on it it's never going to change but God wrote in stone because only God can do that with his finger he can do it with a chisel but God did it with his finger and if you turn to Exodus 32!

[27 : 48] 32 I've decided in the new church we need a proper lectern and verse 15 then Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of testimony in his hand tablets which were written on both sides they were written on one side and then the other so you've got the same principle applied to the tablets as you have to the scroll was written on both sides therefore nothing can be added nothing can be taken away really if you take it away you have to chisel out the stone and if you add to it well both sides are already full so you can't scrolls were almost always by the way only written on one side almost always the exception that God scrolls and whether that's a complete exception I don't know written on both sides for reasons we've already explained they would be impossible to handle so

God has written his commandments in stone now that that says to me that God intended these things to be absolutely permanent and there is a natural division in the ten commandments and if I could have the first the previous slide to that one right there are four commandments that all deal with sins against God I'm the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage you shall have no other gods before me if you break that one you sin against God carved images and idolatry second commandment if you break that you're sinning against God taking the Lord's name in vain which is the same again that's a sin against God and the fourth one keeping the Sabbath if you break the Sabbath you're sinning against God so the one that's taken is number three you shall not take the name of the

Lord your God in vain and so on one side of the Zechariah scroll he's saying anybody who swears falsely in my name is going to reap this judgment of having their house consumed then if I could have the next slide up you've got six commandments who which are all aimed at sinning against one another so those who steal and those who swear falsely those who sin against God those who sin against each other and so most of the scholars that deal with it say that what this verse is doing is it's using something you often find with scripture it's using an from one side to reveal that it's the whole side that's being called into question and an example from the other side that reveals that it is the whole of the other side that is called into question so the scroll is almost certainly saying that this judgment is going to come across those people who refuse to keep his commandments or who live in rebellion against

God scholars and rabbis interpret it this way and what they also say is that the same division now they have no way of knowing whether this is true and I have no way of knowing whether this is true but it seems logical the rabbis would teach that the same division existed on the original tablets that there were sins against God on one side and sins against man on the other it's perfectly possible it seems logical I can't be dogmatic about it because we don't know and the Bible is not clear on it so just to sum up what this means is the reference to those who steal and those who swear falsely in God's name actually indicates judgment against all those who break any of the ten commandments it's worth a very very small aside here to say those of us who are saved we already know we're going to break his commandments but we've already gained his forgiveness for our misdeeds sounds like a cop out but it's not really because then you've given him leave to change your heart and so reading on in Zechariah you better go back there is this is this going in I'm not baffling anybody Zechariah 5 what you then get is the finality of what's being promised here and we we are we're in a country where churches make light of sin this passage does not make light of sin because what it next says in verse 4 I will make it go forth it being the scroll the word of God the word of God we read in the book of Hebrews is powerful to the dividing of joints and marrow and soul and spirit so he I will make it the scroll go forth declares the Lord of hosts and it will enter the houses of the thief and the houses of the one who swears falsely by my name and it will spend the night within that house and consume it with its timbers and stones that is not light talk right to those who are unrepentant they're going to lose everything life itself all possessions everything that they ever held dear will be gone and if ever there was an exhortation to get saved this is it because the scroll is complete the scroll is definite the scroll is eternal the scroll will have its way and so to be the one against whom the scroll is coming in judgment is not where you want to be and God has provided us a very easy and straightforward way out which is submit to him as your [34 : 24] Lord now rather than as your judge when the scroll flies through in verse three it says that such people will be purged away naha in Hebrew which means which means to be made clean what it means is that the people who the judgment is coming against are being cleaned out but of course we've already been made clean by the blood of Jesus so our house cleaning has already been done you could argue and I would argue this is going into it kind of becomes more real next week when we look at God's house in more detail but in the book of Hebrews it says Moses was Moses was a servant in his house as a servant servant but

Jesus was a servant in his house as a son and it then says whose house we are so our house cleaning has already been done if we're saved if we're not it still needs doing and the question is is it going to be done by getting saved or is it going to be done because God is eradicating you and your sin and everything that had ever anything to do with you off the face of the earth and into oblivion and into the lake of fire in those final days so I think the only application I can put to this is this enigmatic vision mysterious vision emphasizes the need to make right choices about how we relate to God God being the word of God the living word the only unforgivable sin the only unforgivable sin is rejecting him rejecting

Jesus when the Bible talks about committing the unforgivable sin if you read it in more detail you'll find that it means rejecting Jesus and so the exhortation in this chapter and the first vision is to make right choices now and not suffer the consequences of making bad choices while you've got this life on earth and I hope that's been helpful father thank you so much for this word it is somewhat awe inspiring in some way way it's a passage of scripture I'd rather skirt around because it's very direct but Lord thank you that you made your will so clear when it comes to dealing with sin and thank you that you left us in no doubt that salvation is there for us but so is judgment if we refuse salvation and I pray that there will be no one in this room that rejects your salvation and therefore books themselves a place in hell

Lord I do pray that your word your scroll will go forth and people will be able to put their trust in you for their salvation rather than wait in fearful expectation of your judgment in Jesus name Amen