Zechariah 5:1-4

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Zechariah 5:1–4 (ESV)***1 Again I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, a flying scroll! 2 And he said to me, “What do you see?” I answered, “I see a flying scroll. Its length is twenty cubits, and its width ten cubits.” 3 Then he said to me, “This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land. For everyone who steals shall be cleaned out according to what is on one side, and everyone who swears falsely shall be cleaned out according to what is on the other side. 4 I will send it out, declares the YHWH of Hosts, and it shall enter the house of the thief, and the house of him who swears falsely by my name. And it shall remain in his house and consume it, both timber and stones.”

1. Chapter five presents the SIXTH and SEVENTH visions of Zechariah. Review again the main points of the previous visions:  
   a) Introduction, Zech 1:1-6  
   b) First Vision, “Man & horses in the myrtle trees”: Zech 1:7-17   
   c) Second Vision, “Four horns and craftsmen”: Zech 1:18-21 .   
   d) Third Vision & Oracle, “ Man with measuring line”: Zech 2  
   e) Fourth Vision, “Satan accuses the High Priest”: Zech 3   
   f) Fifth Vision, “Golden Lampstand & Olive Trees”: Zech 4

a) Introduction, Zech 1:-1-6  
Repent! Don’t be like your ancestors! Return to me and I will return to you.

b) First Vision, “Man & horses in the myrtle trees”: Zech 1:7-17   
Be encouraged – YHWH will rebuild His city and His land, and with dwell with His people again, bringing prosperity to them.

c) Second Vision, “Four horns and craftsmen”: Zech 1:18-21 .   
YHWH knows His people have been suffering under the hands of others nations, and is going to punish those nations. The abuses will be paid for. Take heart, be encouraged, for I am your God.

d) Third Vision & Oracle, “ Man with measuring line”: Zech 2  
YHWH will be rebuild the city like never before. It will be filled with people so walls cannot contain it. It will be prosperous and powerful… they will plunder the nations that have plundered them. And they will have the protection and presence of YHWH. Judgment day is coming!

e) Fourth Vision, “Satan accuses the High Priest”: Zech 3  
Yeshua (Joshua the high priest) is a sign of Yeshua the Messiah to come; “my servant the Branch”. Satan accuses Yeshua before God as unclean and unfit for duties as High Priest; but then he is made clean and pure. Likewise, the sins of the nation will be removed in a single day.

f) Fifth Vision “Golden Lampstand & Olive Trees” This vision promises that the Zerubbabel will see the temple reconstruction completed. Therefore the people should follow his leadership. He will lead them successfully. Furthermore, he and Yeshua are anointed ones of YHWH, standing beside Him as chosen ones for this task.

1. What does the scroll seem to symbolize? Consider also Ezek 2:8 - 3:3.

***Ezekiel 2:8–3:3***“But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.” And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe. And he said to me, “Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat. And he said to me, “Son of man, feed your belly with this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” Then I ate it, and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.

The scroll is the Word of YHWH. Probably the Torah, and as well as the Word of judgment (lamentations and woes) spoken by the prophets who were proclaiming judgment upon those who do not keep the Torah.

1. How would you define a curse according to Scripture? Consider Deut 28.

A curse is the opposite of a blessing. A blessing is a good consequence of keeping the covenant responsibilities. A curse is a bad consequence that comes from not keeping the covenant responsibilities.

1. Why would this scroll be a curse? Look at Deut 27:26, Deut 29:24-28, Joshua 8:34, Jer. 29:18-19, and Daniel 9:11.

***Deuteronomy 27:26***‘Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

***Deuteronomy 29:24–28***All the nations will say, ‘Why has YHWH done thus to this land? What caused the heat of this great anger?’ Then people will say, ‘It is because they abandoned the covenant of YHWH, the God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, and went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them. Therefore the anger of YHWH was kindled against this land, ***bringing upon it all the curses written in this book***, and YHWH uprooted them from their land in anger and fury and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as they are this day.’

***Joshua 8:34***And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law.

***Jeremiah 29:18–19***I will pursue them with sword, famine, and pestilence, and will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, a terror, a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them, because they did not pay attention to my words, declares YHWH, that I persistently sent to you by my servants the prophets, but you would not listen, declares YHWH.’

***Daniel 9:11***All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him.

Throughout Scripture we are told that the consequence of not keeping the Torah results in curses.

1. It is also interesting that Paul in the Apostolic Scriptures refers to the “curse of the law”, or literally “the curse of the Torah” in passages such as Galatians 3:10-13. Some Christians have mistakenly concluded that the “curse” is the “Law”. However, what Paul is teaching is no different from what the Torah itself (the Law) teaches. What really is “the curse of the Torah”?

***Galatians 3:10–13***For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.”

The curse of the Torah is the not the Torah itself, but rather the penalty that results from breaking the Torah. No one but Messiah kept Torah perfectly. Therefore no one kept ALL of Torah, and so everyone was under the curse of Torah. Consider that even by not realizing that righteousness comes by faith (Hab 2:4 and Gal 3:11) rather than by legalistic observance of commands, the Torah is not being followed in its entirety, and therefore is a curse.

***Galatians 3:11*** (Paul quotes Hab 2:4 here).Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”

***Habakkuk 2:4***Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

1. What are the dimensions of the scroll, and do these numbers have any symbolic meaning? As food for thought look at 1 Kings 6:3 and 2 Chron 4:2.

***1 Kings 6:3***The vestibule in front of the nave of the house was twenty cubits long, equal to the width of the house, and ten cubits deep in front of the house.

***2 Chronicles 4:2***Then he made the sea of cast metal. It was round, ten cubits from brim to brim, and five cubits high, and a line of thirty cubits measured its circumference.

20 cubits x 10 cubits (or 30 feet x 15 feet). Typical scrolls were about 12” wide and 20 feet or so long. Or they could be measured as about 12” wide and 4” in diameter. It would seem most likely from the proportions given that we are looking a scroll that is 30’ wide and 15’ in diameter.

It was HUGE for a scroll, perhaps an indication of its importance. It seems like this would tell the people that the Word of YHWH is important and should be followed. The consequences for not keeping his commands are real.

Perhaps also, it is meant to link to the measurements of the altar of the temple or the porch of Solomon’s temple, in the sense that both of these places have to do with the sanctuary – the place where YHWH meets with His people. I don’t really know… it seems like a stretch.

1. Is there any significance or symbolism in the fact that the scroll was “flying”?

Maybe… human hands never touch a flying scroll. The message from God and not man. Furthermore, flying indicates quickly… the curses will quickly come upon those who are guilty.

1. What are the two sins mentioned that will cause the curse to come upon them? Which of the ten commandments (ten words) do these refer to?

Those who steal (commandment #8), and those who swear falsely in the name of YHWH (commandment #3).

***Exodus 20:15***“You shall not steal.

***Exodus 20:7***“You shall not take the name of YHWH your God in vain, for YHWH will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

1. Remembering that this prophetic vision is full of symbolism, what broader sins might these two specifically mentioned sins represent?

Many suggest that these two sins represent breaking **any** of the Torah, in that first has to do with interpersonal human relationships and the second with mans relationship and responsibility to YHWH. Therefore all sins can symbolically can be included in one or the other of these categories.

1. In Zech 5:3, the ESV says “everyone who steals shall be **cleaned out**… and everyone who swears falsely shall be **cleaned out**”. The Hebrew word translated as “cleaned out” is really **nakah** which literally means “to go unpunished, consider innocent, banished, destitute”. Eugene Merrill in his commentary on Zechariah translates the word as “to purge”. Also note that the same word is used in Joel 3:21 where the ESV translates it as “avenge”. So… what do you think Zech 5:3 really means?? And what English word would you use to translate **nakah** here?

***Zechariah 5:3***Then he said to me, “This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land. For everyone who steals **shall be cleaned out** according to what is on one side, and everyone who swears falsely **shall be cleaned out** according to what is on the other side.

***Joel 3:21***I will ***avenge*** their blood, blood I have not avenged, for YHWH dwells in Zion.”

The context suggests that YHWH will **avenge** the guilty or he will **purge** the guilty. It seems to say that punishment will occur as the result of the need to avenge for the sins committed. Or that the sin (and the sinner) will be purged from the land. So it would seen that either “purge” or “avenge” would seem to be a good translation for **nakah.**

1. To add more to the confusion, look at Nahum 1:3 which also uses the word **nakah** and says “YHWH will in no way **nakah** the guilty”, yet in Zech 5:3 it seems clear that YHWH will indeed **nakah** the guilty! How do you reconcile these two verses? What would you use to translate **nakah** now?

***Nahum 1:3***YHWH is slow to anger and great in power, and YHWH will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

This comparison suggests that "avenge" may be the best translation, since it can be used in both verses without conflict. One avenges a wrong to make it right, to correct it. **This can been defined as "making the wrong go away"**. But there are different ways to make the wrong go away. One way is to forgive for the wrong, and not punish for it. Another way is exact payment, or punish for the wrong. In both cases the word "avenge" can be used, but the consequences or actions in how the "avenging” is accomplished can be totally opposite. So in the context of Nahum, YHWH **will not avenge** the guilty in the sense that he will not “make the wrong go away” – that is, he will not forgive or ignore their sins. And then in the context of Zechariah, YHWH **will avenge** the guilty by punishing them for their sins.

1. The scroll will go in the “house” of the one breaking YHWH’s commands and consume it. What might “the house” represent? Can you give examples where “the house” in Hebrew refers to people rather buildings?

Ha Bet – the house – often refers to descendants or followers. The “house of David” refers to all the offspring of David (over many generations). The “house of Hillel” refers to the disciples or followers of Hillel. The House of Israel refers to all the descendants of Israel. So the destruction of the **entire house** of these who break Torah seems to symbolize the destruction of the family or all those associated with the person.

1. Summarize this vision and its meaning.

The scroll is the Word of YHWH containing the covenant responsibilities of His people, as well as the consequences for not keeping those responsibilities. In accordance with the Words of the covenant, judgment and destruction will come upon all those who refuse to align their lives with His Word.

1. Contrast this vision and its message with that of vision #3. See Zech 2:5.

***Zechariah 2:5***And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares YHWH, and I will be the glory in her midst.

For those who keep the covenant, YHWH will be a wall of fire around them for their protection. For those that break the covenant, YHWH will reduce them and their household to utter destruction.

1. How would this vision have been received by the people of Zechariah’s time? What would it have encouraged them to do?

It is a wake up call to know that punishment will come to those that refuse to follow God’s commands. It would encourage them to want to be on the right side of this coming judgement.

1. How does this prophetic vision apply to us today?