

Chapter Five

Introduction: This chapter reveals the judgments of God upon the wicked Jews for their sins, the measure was filled up, and of the execution of them, which are represented in two visions: the first is of a flying roll, which signifies the curse of God, and is described by its measure, the length being twenty cubits, and the breadth ten; and by the extent of it, it reaching to the whole earth, and particularly to thieves and false swearers, who shall be cut off by it; and by the certainty of its coming into the houses of such, and the utter desolation it should make of them, #Zec 5:1-4 and the other is the vision of an ephah, and a woman sitting in it, and a talent of lead cast upon the mouth of it, which signified wickedness, #Zec 5:5-8 this "ephah" is seen to be lifted up between earth and heaven by two women, who are said to have wings like the wings of storks, and the wind to be in them; and who are said by the angel to carry the "ephah" into the land of Shinar, to build it a house, that it might be established and settled upon its own base, #Zec 5:9-11.

5:1 ¶ Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll.

Having gained the understanding of the candlesticks and the two trees the prophet looks away from that vision only to be confronted by another. He saw a flying book. Books were written on parchment were rolled into a cylinder.

2 And he said unto me, What do you see? And I answered; I see a flying roll; the length thereof [is] twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.

This is a huge book however it is not an unusual size and there are known scrolls of larger dimensions. This one happens to be the measure of the porch of the temple which the Jews would have recognized and indeed some of their teachers say this scroll proceeded from the temple.

3 Then said he unto me, This [is] the curse that goes forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that steals shall be cut off [as] on this side according to it; and every one that swears shall be cut off [as] on that side according to it.

This is understood to be the Law of Moses by the Jews, which was often called a curse because of the curses it contained. Two sins are said to be written on the outside of the scroll (cylinder) one that breaks the first table of the law and another that violates the second table of the law so that both respect for God's person and God's laws have been trampled by the people who have rejected God and His messiah. The early Jews said wherever this curse of God lighted it would remain forever. Thus this is not a strange symbolism to the prophet and even without the explanation of the angel would most likely have made sense to the Jewish religious leaders when they considered it.

4 I will bring it forth, says the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that swears 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.

God has declared the curses He has in store for those who disobey His commands and who disregard His person (the 1st & 2nd tables of the law) these will surely come forth from the treasury of God because God Himself has declared it. Once the wrath of God is spilled out (gone forth) there is no stopping it from reaching this conclusion declared by God. The Jews taught that, “a man that swears much shall be full of iniquity, and the plague shall not depart from his house:” and, “if a man swears in vain, he shall not be innocent or justified, for his house shall be full of calamities.” Likewise John Gill speaking on this passage says “So the oracle in Herodotus , which Grotius has observed, makes an utter destruction of a man’s house and family, to be the punishment of the sin of perjury. Moreover, by the house of the thief and swearer may be meant the temple, as in the times of Christ, which was become a den of thieves and perjurers, and for their sins, became desolate, #Mt 21:13 23:38.”

5 Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now your eyes, and see what [is] this that goes forth.

The angel moved from wherever he was standing while explaining the previous visions and directed the prophet to look upward. Whether the prophet is to look at the heaven or as some claim to look at the temple isn’t clear and of no significance.

6 And I said, What [is] it? And he said, This [is] an ephah that goes forth. He said moreover, This [is] their resemblance through all the earth.

An ephah in use at the time of the prophecy equal to roughly seven “wine” gallons. The Jews saw this as being a false measure and that these false measures were being revealed in this vision. Others that this is the filling up of inequity in Judea and that god’s judgment will come forth and His wrath revealed against these false measures when it is filled up. Matthew 23:32 indicates this as against Jerusalem well as Revelation 18:5-6 indicating the filling up of the measure against the anti-Christian states. Some see this as the prosperity or material things that belong to the church which carnal men see while God sees the injustices.

7 And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this [is] a woman that sits in the midst of the ephah.

There is some debate as to the exact weight this indicates, but it is around 100 pounds by most reckonings. It is then called a woman. Some say

because woman first sinned and then enticed man. Others say it is called a woman because it will flatter (material possessions) and entice like a woman. Rome is picture as a woman in Revelation and further as a whore. I see that as the intent here as it indicates the infidelity shown by the people toward God and as indicated earlier is upon the whole earth not just the Jews in Jerusalem. Once again then we see a very present application as well as true prophecy of what the world will be like at the incarnation of Christ and as we know from John's vision in Revelation will even be truer of the world in the last days. The ways and wealth of the world bearing false witness against God and stealing from the poor goes its merry way with no concern for tomorrow. Yet this prophecy says the eye of God is upon the actions of men and God is taking note thereof and the measure is being filled up and the day of reckoning is sure because God has declared it.

8 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.

John Gill presents the best explanation of this verse I am aware of. He says, "A representation of wicked men, who are wickedness itself, as their inward part is, #Ps 5:9 and particularly of the wicked one, the man of sin and son of perdition, the Roman antichrist and apocalyptic beast; who, though he is called by this title, "his Holiness", his true and proper name is "wickedness"; o anomov, that wicked lawless one, #2Th 2:8 yea, wickedness itself, being extremely wicked, a sink of sin and of all abominations, #Re 17:5 18:2". This being thrown into the ephah, but not filling it shows that even the sins of the antichrist are within the bounds of God and while contained in the measure of God are not the whole of it.

9 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.

Wings to show the speed with which God will bring about His judgment when the measure is filled. Like a stork because they were known to have flown thousands of miles and had the ability to carry out swiftly the task assigned by God in lifting up this symbol of evil and God's judgment between the heaven and earth so all mankind could see it. Likewise though a strong bird capable of great trips and carrying heavy objects the stork is a particularly gentle bird and some teach this is to show that though it is just and is God's wrath it is carried out evenly and with a gentle justice. It is also written that every eye shall see and every knee shall bow when the Lord appears in the heavens. Prior to this the flying scrolls, the books mentioned in Revelation, are seen and of these books it is said that none will utter one word of defense as a just judge condemns them to the fires of hell. The evil men do is not unknown to them and by the natural light

and having been created in the image of God men know that what they do is contrary to God and that God is taking notes of their actions. Yet the greed of their corrupt hearts leads them happily down this path of condemnation unless God shows grace and draws them to His Son, the Messiah revealed in the prophecies of this book.

10 Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah?

Note well that the prophet does not ask what the ephah is, what it contents represent, or who the women are, for he knows this is wickedness (the woman) and an unfair balance (the lead) and this is God's record of sin being measured by God until all wickedness is filled. Man has always known what was evil and what was good, it comes naturally from the soul given to all mankind by God from creation. He instead simply asks, where are they taking this? It isn't full yet, so the time is not now, so where and what are they doing with the ephah, not what it represents is the question. Likewise many today wonder why bad things seem to often overtake the most gentle and righteous ones we know while the evil ones continue on their merry way. Why does evil prosper and why does God not take judgment is a question asked by many in many different situations today as it was then. But the measure known only to God is not filled. God is longsuffering that all might have the chance to repent and turn to Him. Yet we know even with such evil being revealed, not one ever has or ever will seek God. Christ says none come unto me unless the Father draws them. Thus we see the most clear verse in the Bible setting forth the sequence of the salvation of God's elect in Ephesians 2:8-9 where we read "8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast." As God in grace alone regenerates, then gives to man the gift of faith that he might believe in Jesus Christ. When we consider that Christ said there is no other way, I am the way, the light, and the light that there is within the midst of the church those who say Christ is not the only way. Christianity is not inclusive as many want to teach but is exclusive, it is Jesus Christ or the fires of hell, and there is no other way. Meantime the evils of man continue to flow into the ephah of God until God's measure is full, and then shall be the judgment.