

The Books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

Lesson 5: Visions of Judgment and Removed Sin -- Zechariah 5:1-6:15

Imagine standing in a quiet field at dawn and looking up to see something impossible drifting across the sky. Not a bird, not a cloud, but a scroll, enormous and unrolled, thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide, flying through the air with writing on both sides. You cannot read every word from where you stand, but you can feel its weight, the sense that this is not a poem or a love letter. It is a verdict, and it is on the move. That is exactly what the prophet Zechariah saw, and the angel did not let him guess at its meaning. This is the curse, he said, that goes out over the face of the whole land. God's word had taken to the air, and it was hunting sin.

We do not always like to think of God's word that way. We prefer it gentle, comforting, a soft light for the bedside table. And it is comforting, gloriously so. But Zechariah's night visions remind us that the same word which heals also judges, that the God who forgives is also holy, and that He takes sin far more seriously than we do. In these chapters we watch a flying scroll go after the thief and the liar, we watch a woman named Wickedness sealed in a basket and flown away to Babylon, and we watch four chariots thunder out to the four winds of heaven to carry out the will of the Lord of all the earth. Judgment is real. Sin is removed. And neither happens by accident.

Yet these visions do not end in thunder. They end with a crown. In the closing scene of chapter 6, God tells Zechariah to take silver and gold and make a crown, and to set it on the head of Joshua the high priest, and then to speak a name that has been waiting in the wings of the whole study: Behold, the man whose name is the Branch. Here is a priest wearing a king's crown, a single figure who will build the temple of the Lord and bear royal honor and sit and rule on his throne. The visions of removed sin were never the end of the story. They were clearing the ground for someone to come and build.

So read these chapters slowly, and let them do two things at once. Let them sober you, because God's holiness is not a thing to trifle with, and the sin we excuse in ourselves He fully intends to carry away. And let them lift you, because the one who carries it away is the priest-King already crowned, already reigning, already building His house out of people gathered from near and far. The God who hunts sin with a flying scroll is the same God who set a crown on a coming Savior. Both are true, and you need both.

Group Discussion: In the vision of the flying scroll, God's word goes out as an active curse against the thief and the one who swears falsely (Zechariah 5:1-4). We often speak of the Bible as a source of comfort, and it is. Why is it important that we also recover the truth that God's

word actively judges sin, and what is lost when we make Scripture only soothing and never searching?

Personal Reflection: The woman named Wickedness was sealed in a basket and carried completely away to a far country (5:5–11). Is there a sin in your own life that you have learned to manage and live alongside, rather than letting God carry it entirely away? Name it honestly to yourself, and ask why you have settled for managing what God means to remove.

Read Zechariah 5:1–6:15

Study Questions

1. Zechariah looks up and sees a great scroll flying through the air, and the angel calls it “the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land” against the thief and the one who swears falsely by God’s name (5:1–4). What does this vision reveal about the nature of God’s word, that it does not merely inform but actively goes out to judge sin? What does this teach us about how seriously God regards sin we tend to overlook?
2. The flying scroll singles out two sins, stealing and swearing falsely, sins against our neighbor and sins against God’s name (5:3–4). If God’s word were to fly over your own life today and search it the way it searched theirs, where would it most likely stop? Be specific about the area it would expose.
3. In the next vision a woman named “Wickedness” is shut inside a basket, a heavy lead cover is thrown over its mouth, and she is carried away to the land of Shinar (5:5–11). What does this dramatic, decisive removal teach us about how thoroughly God deals with sin among His people? Why is it significant that wickedness is not merely covered but carried completely out of the land?
4. Notice that wickedness is sealed under a lead weight and removed entirely, not just pushed to the edges (5:7–8). Where in your life have you settled for keeping a sin contained rather

than truly removing it, managing the habit instead of letting God carry it away? What would full removal, not mere management, actually look like for you?

5. Wickedness is flown to Shinar, the land of Babylon, the very place of exile and rebellion, and a house is built for it there (5:11). What does it teach us about God's holiness that sin must be put utterly outside the place where His people dwell, and that He will not allow wickedness a permanent home among them? How does this prepare us to understand the work of Christ, who came to take sin away (John 1:29)?
6. God's pattern is to remove sin entirely from His people so that He may dwell with them in holiness (5:5–11). What is one specific way you sense God calling you to let Him carry something out of your life so that your heart can be a fitting dwelling place for Him? What have you been afraid to surrender completely?
7. In chapter 6 Zechariah sees four chariots with horses going out between two mountains of bronze, and the angel says these are "the four winds of heaven" going out as God's agents, with His Spirit set at rest in the north country (6:1–8). What does this vision reveal about God's sovereign rule over all the earth, that He sends out His agents to patrol and to carry out His will everywhere? How does this comfort and sober us at the same time?
8. The chariots go out to the four corners of the earth, and nothing on the whole earth lies outside the reach of the Lord of all the earth (6:5–8). How does it change the way you live to know that there is no corner of your life, public or hidden, that lies outside God's notice and rule? Where do you most need to live this week as though God truly sees and governs everything?

9. In the climactic vision God commands that a crown be made and set on the head of Joshua the high priest, with the words, “Behold, the man whose name is the Branch... it is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne” (6:9–13). How does this crowning of a priest with a king’s crown point beyond Joshua to Christ, who unites the offices of priest and king? What does it mean that the Branch builds the temple of the Lord, and how does “those who are far off shall come and help build the temple” (6:15) reveal that this temple is the church, gathered from all nations, rather than a future literal building?

10. Look back across the whole sweep of these visions, from the flying scroll that judges sin, to the woman of wickedness carried away, to the chariots that patrol the earth, to the crowned priest-King who builds God’s house. Name one specific way the Lord is using these chapters to form Christ in you this week, whether by deepening your reverence for His holiness, your honesty about a sin you have been managing, or your hope in the King who reigns and builds even now.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: John 1:29, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; Hebrews 7:23–28, Jesus our priest-King who lives forever to intercede; Psalm 110:1–4, the Lord who is both King at God’s right hand and a priest forever; 1 Peter 2:4–10, the people of God built up as a spiritual house and holy priesthood; Ephesians 2:13–22, those once far off brought near and built together into a dwelling place for God.

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