

Session 7 The Forerunner Message in Zechariah 5-6

I. INTRODUCTION

A. **Review:** Zechariah received eight visions in one night (1:7-6:8). The sixth, seventh, and eighth visions in Zechariah 5-6 go together as the fourth and fifth visions in Zechariah 3-4 go together.

B. Outline of Zechariah 5-6

Zechariah 5	The cleansing of Israel's people and land
5:1-4	The sixth vision: The flying scroll
5:5-11	The seventh vision: The woman in the basket in Babylon
Zechariah 6	The eighth vision: The four chariots
6:1-8	The four chariots and the victory of God's kingdom
6:9-15	The crowning of Joshua symbolized the coming Messiah

C. The Lord's zeal for Jerusalem is the context for each of these eight visions.

¹⁴***“Proclaim... ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “I am zealous for Jerusalem...””*** (Zech. 1:14)

D. The sixth and seventh visions describe Israel's *national cleansing* (5:1-11). The sixth vision speaks of removing *individual sinners* from Israel (5:1-4), while the seventh is about removing the *systems of sin* from Israel (5:5-11). The eighth highlights God removing all His enemies worldwide (6:1-8).

II. THE SIXTH VISION: THE FLYING SCROLL (ZECH. 5:1-4)

A. **Summary:** Zechariah saw a large scroll flying through the sky with a message that all could read, announcing God's judgment on all who steal and lie. He will remove sinners from Israel (5:1-4).

¹I turned and raised my eyes and saw there a flying scroll. ²And he said to me, “What do you see?” So I answered, “I see a flying scroll. Its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits.”³... He said to me, “This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth.” (Zech. 5:1-3)

1. ***A flying scroll:*** The scroll here speaks of God's Word calling people to obey Him. This scroll includes the declaration of the judgments set forth in the Word for rebelling against God.

2. ***Its length:*** The scroll was 20 cubits long (30 feet) and 10 cubits wide (15 feet). This is the same size as the *holy place* in Moses' tabernacle (Ex. 26:8) and as the *porch* of Solomon's temple (1 Kgs. 6:3) where the priests prayed between the porch and the altar (Joel 2:17).

B. The interpretation of the symbolism of the scroll (5:3): The writing on both sides of the scroll parallels the way that the Lord wrote on the two tablets of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 32:15-16). The flying scroll was fully open with writing on both sides so all could see its contents; thus, no one will be able to plead ignorance of God's requirements written in it.

³Then he said... “This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth: ‘Every thief shall be expelled,’ according to this side of the scroll; and ‘every perjurer shall be expelled,’ according to that side of it.”⁴“I will send out the curse,” says the LORD...” (Zech. 5:3-4)

1. **Every perjurer:** Perjury sins against God by swearing falsely in His name. It breaks the third commandment—which is on the first tablet of the law—and summarizes loving God.
 2. **Every thief:** Stealing is a sin against one’s neighbor. It breaks the eighth commandment—which is on the second tablet of the law—and summarizes loving man.
 3. **The whole earth:** The Hebrew word *ha’arets* can mean *the earth* or *the land* of Israel. The context determines which word to use. “The land” here is contrasted with “the land of Shinar” (5:11). In my opinion, *land* is intended here because those on whom the curse falls are the families that swear falsely by the Lord (5:4), which speaks of Israelites, not Gentiles.
- C. The Lord will release the curse of the law across the land of Israel (5:4).
⁴“I will send out the curse,” says the LORD of hosts; “It shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name. It shall remain in the midst of his house and consume it, with its timber and stones.” (Zech. 5:4)
1. **Entering the house:** Zechariah personified the curse by describing it as entering into the home of the one who refuses to obey the Lord.
 2. **It shall remain until it consumes:** God’s judgment will continue until it entirely consumes every facet of that home. There will be no escape because God is the source of His judgment. Only those who repent will avoid the curses of the covenant (Deut. 30:1-6).
 3. Jesus removed the curse by becoming a curse for any who will give their life to Him.
¹³Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. (Gal. 3:13)
- D. Malachi prophesied God would cleanse Israel in the end times so that they could live righteously (Mal. 3:5). He will bring *swift* judgment on perjurers and thieves who exploit people. Throughout history He has shown Himself to be patient in confronting the sin in His people and in the nations. His “swift witness” mode of releasing His judgments will be seen in full force in the Tribulation.
³He will purify the sons of Levi...that they may offer...offering in righteousness... ⁵I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans...because they do not fear Me.” (Mal. 3:3-5)
1. The Lord held His peace or was “silent” in terms of not openly releasing the fullness of His judgments to confront rebellion. He restrained Himself according to the Father’s timetable.
¹³The LORD shall go forth [Jesus’ return]... like a man of war... ¹⁴“I have held My peace [been silent] a long time; I have been still and restrained Myself...” (Isa. 42:13-14)
 2. The church in Jerusalem experienced the Lord’s swift witness against sin when Ananias and Sapphira were judged quickly for lying (Acts 5:1-11). His “swift witness” mode of releasing judgment will occur in Israel’s darkest hour—when Jerusalem is like Sodom (Rev. 11:8).
³I will give power to my two witnesses...⁴These are the two olive trees [Zech. 4:14]... standing before the God of the earth...⁸Their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city [Jerusalem] which spiritually is called Sodom...where also our Lord was crucified. (Rev. 11:3-8)

III. THE SEVENTH VISION: THE WOMAN IN THE BASKET (ZECH. 5:5-11)

A. **Summary:** The seventh vision describes Israel’s national cleansing in removing “systems of sin” from Israel to Babylon (5:5-11) in contrast to the sixth vision that highlighted the removal of individual sins and sinners from Israel (5:3-4). Zechariah saw a wicked woman trapped inside a basket (5:6-8) and two women with wings who picked up the basket and took it to Babylon (5:11).

B. One point that is emphasized is that the basket is taken from Israel to Babylon. Revelation 17-18 developed the prophetic theme of Babylon’s role in the end times far more than Zechariah 5.

1. John described a global economic and religious system—the harlot Babylon (Rev. 17-18)—that was introduced by Zechariah as “a wicked woman in the basket” (5:5-11).
2. Satan will use economics as a primary means of controlling people in the end times.

C. The vision of the woman in the basket (5:5-8):

⁵The angel...said to me, “Lift your eyes now, and see what this is that goes forth.” ⁶So I asked, “What is it?” And he said, “It is a basket that is going forth.” He also said, “This is their resemblance throughout the earth: ⁷Here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket.” ⁸Then he said, “This is Wickedness!” And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth. (Zech. 5:5-8)

1. **Basket:** The word *basket* is an English translation of *ephah* (5:6b). An ephah was a standard commercial measurement. It was both a measurement and a container. A demonically energized global economic system is symbolized by the basket or the ephah (5:7).
2. **The basket is going forth:** The basket “goes forth” to influence others throughout the earth. Merchants, or financiers, hold influential and powerful positions in society worldwide.
3. **This is Wickedness:** The woman represents a wicked global economic system (5:8).
4. **This is their resemblance:** The wickedness of the woman in the basket resembled the kind of wickedness that will go forth in all the nations. The resemblance (appearance) of wickedness will look the same in principle across the nations yet may have different applications.
5. **Lead disc:** A heavy lead cover was lifted up to reveal the woman trapped inside (5:7).
6. **Thrust her down:** The woman tried to escape, not wanting to be restrained from attaining global dominance (5:8). The heavy lid on top prevented her from escaping. The angel thrust her down and slammed a lid over her, restraining her until God’s time for her release.

D. Two women carried the basket away from Israel to Babylon by the wind of the Spirit (5:9).

⁹...and there were two women, coming with the wind in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven. (Zech. 5:9)

1. **With the wind:** Flying with the wind speaks of divine assistance. The Hebrew word *ruach* means *wind* or *Spirit*. They do God’s will by the wind of the Spirit in moving the basket.
2. **Wings of a stork:** Storks are strong birds, capable of carrying loads a long distance.

E. The interpretation of the symbolism of the two women (5:10-11):

¹⁰*I said to the angel who talked with me, “Where are they carrying the basket?” ¹¹*And he said to me, “To build a house for it in the land of Shinar [Babylon]; when it is ready, the basket will be set there on its base.” (Zech. 5:10-11)**

1. **The land of Shinar:** The land of Shinar is the ancient name for Babylon, where the tower of Babel was originally built (Gen. 10:10; 11:2; 14:1, 9). It is in present-day Iraq.
2. **To build a house for it:** The two women carried the basket to a place where a house was built for it (5:11). The *house* here speaks of a system of wickedness (Rev. 17-18).
3. **When it is ready:** When God’s plan in the nations have developed, then the base for the harlot Babylon systems will move from Israel to Babylon. There is a time when “the base” in Babylon will be ready—when 10 kings give their power to the Antichrist (Rev. 17:17).
¹³*“They [ten kings] will give their power and authority to the beast [Antichrist]...¹⁷For **God** has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.” (Rev. 17:13-17)*
4. **Set there on its base:** This organized system of wickedness will have a base (Rev. 17). When she is based in Babylon, a new dynamic and escalation of wickedness will occur.

F. **Harlot Babylon:** This system will be established in proximity to the rebuilt city of Babylon. The judgments which Jeremiah prophesied about Babylon’s sudden, total, and final destruction have not yet fully happened (Jer. 50-51). The harlot will have global authority by controlling the world’s most powerful leaders (kings and merchants) through economics (Rev. 18:3, 9, 11, 15, 17, 19, 23).

³*“All the nations have drunk of...her [Babylon’s] fornication, the kings of the earth...and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.” (Rev. 18:3)*

IV. THE FOUR CHARIOTS AND THE VICTORY OF GOD’S KINGDOM (ZECH. 6:1-8)

A. In his eighth vision, Zechariah saw the Lord removing all of His enemies worldwide (6:1-8). The greatest breakthrough of God’s kingdom is coming—this is developed in Zechariah 9-14.

¹*Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze. ²*With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, ³*with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses—strong steeds. (Zech. 6:1-3)***

B. Zechariah saw four angelic war chariots coming out from between two bronze mountains (6:1). These invisible chariots are sent by God to overthrow Gentile world powers to prepare way for the millennial kingdom. There is clear connection between Zechariah’s first and last visions on this night (1:7-17). In 6:1-8, he may have seen the same angelic war chariots (as in 1:8) being commissioned by God to judge hostile Gentile nations (not merely to report on them).

1. **Four:** Four is the number of the earth, implying that which is worldwide. Four also speaks of the four Gentile world empires, whose successive reign makes up the “*times of Gentiles*” which began with Babylon (not Assyria who was destroyed when attacking Jerusalem).

2. **Four chariots:** These war chariots were commissioned to overthrow Gentile world powers. Chariots suggest a military context, as the Lord declares war on His enemies. These chariots speak of angelic principalities of great stature (6:5) who stand in God’s presence.
 3. **Mountains of bronze:** These symbolize God’s judgment against sin (Rev. 1:15). The chariots went between the “mountains of bronze” with a commission to release God’s judgments.
 4. **Four colors:** The colors of the horses probably speak of their mission.
 - a. **Red horses:** speak of bloodshed in war (Rev. 6:4).
 - b. **Black horses:** speak of mourning caused by famine and death (Rev 6:5).
 - c. **White horses:** speak of the victory of conquest (Rev. 6:2).
 - d. **Dappled horses:** Translated by some as speckled, or spotted or checkered, the combination of colors signifies a mission combining judgment and mercy.
- C. The four chariots are interpreted as four angels of great stature (6:5). These four spirits of heaven parallel the four winds of heaven (Dan. 7:1-3) that stirred up the Great Sea resulting in the same four Gentile empires arising to conquer the known world—comprising the times of the Gentiles. Here, we see angelic activity behind human armies (6:5) to execute God’s judgments on them. The four chariots are four angels of judgment who were commissioned go out to the nations.
- ⁴*Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?”*
⁵*And the angel answered and said to me, “These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth.” (Zech. 6:4-5)*
- D. Divine assignments are given to each team of heavenly chariots (6:6-8). The angel did not mention the red horses in 6:6 when describing the Lord’s commission of the other horses because when this vision was given to Zechariah in 519 BC, Babylon had *already been overthrown* by the Persians in 539 BC. Behind the defeat of Babylon was the angelic chariot, with its red horses of bloodshed.
- ⁶*“The one [chariot] with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them, and the dappled are going toward the south country.”⁷Then the strong steeds went out, eager to go, that they might walk to and fro throughout the earth. And He said, “Go, walk to and fro throughout the earth.” They walked to and fro throughout the earth.⁸And He called to me... saying, “See, those who go toward the north...have given rest to My Spirit in the north country.” (Zech. 6:6-8)*
1. **Black horses:** These symbolize mourning resulting from God’s judgments on the Persians.
 2. **White horses:** These speak of the Lord’s victory over the future Greek empire.
 3. **Dappled horses:** These went south to Egypt which is where the fourth Gentile empire of Rome was first brought into direct contact with Jerusalem. The Spirit highlighted the south knowing that the Roman empire would spread in all directions, covering the known world.
 4. **Rest to My Spirit:** The Spirit will rest when His judgments on the north are completed (6:8). His striving with and judging the nations will one day end (Gen. 6:3). From the north the Antichrist’s armies and harlot Babylon in Shinar will oppress Israel (Ezek. 38:14-16; 39:1-8).

V. THE CROWNING OF JOSHUA SYMBOLIZED THE COMING MESSIAH (ZECH. 6:9-15)

- A. After these eight night visions, the Lord told Zechariah to crown Joshua the high priest with a crown made of silver and gold to symbolize the coming of the Messiah as King-Priest (6:9-11).

⁹*The word of the LORD came...¹⁰“Receive the gift from the captives—from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have come from Babylon—and go the same day and enter the house of Josiah...*

¹¹*Take the silver and gold, make an elaborate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua...”*
(Zech. 6:9-11)

1. **Receive the gift:** Zechariah was told to take the offering of silver and gold (6:11) that three Jewish men from Babylon brought to financially help Zerubbabel’s work on the temple. Zerubbabel completed the temple three years later in March 516 BC (Ezra 6:15).
2. **Make an elaborate crown:** Zechariah was told to make an elaborate, or glorious, crown and then set it on Joshua’s head—this confirmed his calling (3:5, 8) and was symbolic of God’s promise to send the Messiah-Branch to rule the earth from Jerusalem in the Millennium.

- B. A messianic prophecy of Jesus as the Branch (6:12-15): The prophecy promises four things: first, Jesus shall be a priest on a throne; second, He shall build the temple; third, He shall bear the glory and rule on His throne; fourth, Gentiles who are far off shall help build the temple.

¹²*Then speak to him [Joshua], saying, “...Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the LORD; ¹³yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne; so He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”*
(Zech. 6:12-13)

1. **Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH:** Jesus the Branch is a King (Jer. 23:5-6), a servant (Zech. 3:8), a Man (Zech. 6:12), and our Lord (Isa. 4:2). This parallels the fourfold picture of Jesus in the four gospels. “Behold” is both an announcement and exhortation.
2. **From His place He shall branch out:** Jesus the Branch shall “branch out” progressively using His people who connect to Him or who abide in Him and allow His life to flow through them. Jesus referred to this as “abiding in the vine (Jn. 15:4-5).
3. **He shall build the temple of the LORD:** Jesus first built a spiritual temple (Eph. 2:22) in this age. He will build a physical temple in Jerusalem in the age to come (1:16; 8:22).
4. **A priest on His throne:** In Jesus, the two mediatorial offices of priest and king are joined.

- C. The crown was put in the temple as a memorial honoring the generosity of the men from Babylon (6:14).

¹⁴*“Now the elaborate crown shall be for a memorial in the temple of the LORD for Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah. ¹⁵Even those from afar shall come and build the temple of the LORD. Then you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. And this shall come to pass if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.” (Zech. 6:14-15)*