

Post-Exile Prophets: Zechariah
VISION #7: WICKEDNESS UNDER WRAPS

Tuesday, July 1

Reading: Zechariah 5:5-11

Zechariah 5:7 *Then the cover of lead was raised, and there in the basket sat a woman! 8 He said, "This is wickedness," and he pushed her back into the basket and pushed its lead cover down on it.*

In the previous vision (5:1-4), we saw God's judgment on individual wickedness. In this vision, God will judge wickedness in general – represented by the removal of a woman in a basket. We should not read anything into the depiction of wickedness as a woman. The Hebrew word translated wickedness is feminine, so it is natural for its subject to be feminine as well. The basket in which wickedness is contained was sealed with a heavy lead cover to keep her in. Some have tried to identify the particular form of wickedness represented here, but it is likely a reference to all wickedness in general.

After sealing wickedness in, two women with wings like storks pick up the basket to carry it away. That they had "the wind in their wings" signifies the speed in which they do their work. There is some question whether these are holy angels or wicked angels. The stork was an unclean animal according to the Law of Moses, and the mission of these women is "to build a house" for evil. But whether they are holy or wicked, they are doing God's will.

Babylonia (literally Shinar) is their destination. The Jews had just returned from their 70-year exile in Babylon. While this exile had cured them of their idolatry, they had learned some other wicked habits that they had brought back from Babylon. This vision depicts God removing this wickedness from His people and returning it "home" where it belonged. From the very beginning, Babylon has been the center of the world's rebellion against God. It began with the first organized defiance of God at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 10:8-10; 11:1-9) and continued to be the symbol of the wicked world system throughout the Bible. The world may "build a house" for wickedness and set it up "in its place" for worship, but God's people are to keep wickedness as far away from them as possible.

Some believers think they can control wickedness. Like Zechariah's vision, they want to keep sin bottled up like a genie in a bottle and pull it out when they feel like it. But our goal is not to keep sin under control or see how far we can go before ACTUALLY sinning. Our goal is to keep sin as far away from us as possible! And only the Lord can truly remove sin from our lives. We must rely on the Holy Spirit who lives within us.

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh...Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 24-25).

To "walk in step with the Spirit" we must allow Him to have control. No matter how hard we try, we will fail when we try to control our old sinful nature by ourselves. We must consider sin dead to us – crucified with Christ. Is there some sin you need the Holy Spirit to help you eliminate? Confess it to the Lord and ask the Spirit to convict and control your life.