

# CHAPTER 5

## INTRODUCTION TO ZECHARIAH 5

This chapter treats of the judgments of God upon the wicked Jews for their sins and impieties, the measure of which 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 there make, (~~REF~~ Zechariah 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, (~~REF~~ Zechariah 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, (~~REF~~ Zechariah 5:9-11).

**Ver. 1.** *Then I turned, and lift up mine eyes, and looked,* etc.] The prophet turned himself from looking upon the candlestick and olive branches, having had a full and clear understanding of them, and looked another way, and saw another vision:

*and behold a flying roll,* a volume or book flying in the air; it being usual for books, which were written on parchment, to be rolled up in the form of a cylinder; whence they were called rolls or volumes.

**Ver. 2.** *And he said unto me,* etc.] That is, the angel:

*What seest thou? and I answered, I see a flying roll, the length whereof [is] twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits;* so that it was a very large one, a volume of a very uncommon size, especially it may so seem to us; but in other nations they have very long rolls or volumes, even longer than this: the Russians write their acts, protests, and other court matters, on long rolls of paper, some twenty ells, some thirty, and some sixty, and more<sup>f94</sup>: and this being the length and breadth of the porch before the

temple, (<sup><1068></sup>1 Kings 6:3) hence the Jewish writers conclude that this flying roll came from thence: it may design either the roll or book in which the sins of men are written; which is very large, and will quickly be brought into judgment, when it will be opened, and men will be judged according to it; which shows the notice God takes of the sins of men; the exact knowledge he has of them; his strict remembrance of them; and the certain account men must give of them another day: or, the book of God's judgments upon sinners, such as was Ezekiel's roll, (<sup><3809></sup>Ezekiel 2:9,10) which are many and great; are rolled up, and not at present to be searched into; but are flying, coming on, and will be speedily executed: or rather the book of the law, called a roll or volume, (<sup><3907></sup>Psalms 40:7 <sup><4047></sup>Luke 4:17,20) and which will be a swift witness against the breakers of it, as more fully appears from the explanation of it in the next verse (<sup><3878></sup>Zechariah 5:3). It is a mere fancy and conceit of some that the Talmud is meant by this roll, the body of the Jewish traditions, which make void the commands of God, take away the blessing, and leave a curse in the land, as they did in the land of Judea.

**Ver. 3.** *Then said he unto me, This [is] the curse,* etc.] So the law of Moses is called, because it has curses written in it, (<sup><1875></sup>Deuteronomy 27:15-26 28:15-26 29:19,20 30:19) which curse is not causeless, but is according to law and justice; it is from the Lord, and is no other than the wrath of the Almighty; and, wherever it lights, it will remain and continue for ever. Vitringa, on (<sup><3306></sup>Isaiah 24:6) says, this is the curse which Isaiah there prophesies of, which had its accomplishment in the times of Antiochus; but there the prophet is speaking, not of the land of Judea, but of the antichristian states.

*That goeth forth over the face of the whole earth:* over the whole land of Judea, and the inhabitants of it, for their breach of the law, contempt of the Gospel, and the rejection of the Messiah; and which had its accomplishment when wrath came upon them to the uttermost, in the destruction of their nation, city, and temple; and is the curse God threatened to smite their land with, (<sup><3945></sup>Malachi 4:6) and this curse also reaches to the whole world, and the inhabitants of it, who lie in wickedness; and to all sorts of sinners, particularly those next mentioned:

*for everyone that stealeth shall be cut off [as] on this side, according to it;* as it is written and declared on one side of the roll:

*and everyone that sweareth shall be cut off [as] on that side according to it;* as is written and declared on the other side of the roll; which two sins of theft and false swearing, the one being against the second, and the other the first table of the law, show that the curse of the law reaches to all sorts of sins and sinners; to all who do not keep it in every respect: and, indeed, to all but those who are redeemed from it by the blood of Christ; and that it is proportioned according to a man's sins: and those two are particularly mentioned, because they are sins which prevailed among the Jews at the time Christ was on earth. Theft did, both in a literal and figurative sense, (<sup><4234></sup>Matthew 23:14 <sup><4121></sup>Romans 2:21 <sup><4115></sup>Luke 11:52 <sup><4108></sup>John 10:8,10) and so did vain swearing, (<sup><4153></sup>Matthew 5:33-36 23:16-22).

**Ver. 4.** *I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts,* etc.] The roll was come forth, and was flying abroad; but the curse and wrath of God, signified by it, is what God would bring forth out of his treasures, according to his purposes and declarations, and execute upon sinners; which shows the certainty of it, and that there is no escaping it:

*and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth 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;* when wrath is gone forth from the Lord, there is no stopping it; and where it takes place it will remain, there is no getting rid of it; it makes an utter desolation of goods and estates, and entirely destroys both body and soul in hell: there seems to be an allusion to the plague of the leprosy, (<sup><4145></sup>Leviticus 14:45). So the son of Sirach says,

“a man that swears much shall be full of iniquity, and the plague shall not depart from his house:”

and again,

“if a man swears in vain, he shall not be innocent or justified, for his house shall be full of calamities<sup>f95</sup> .”

So the oracle in Herodotus<sup>f96</sup>, 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, (<sup><4213></sup>Matthew 21:13 23:38).

**Ver. 5.** *Then the angel that talked with me went forth*, etc.] From the place where he was, and had been interpreting the vision of the flying roll, unto another more convenient for showing and explaining the following one; and, as it should seem, took the prophet along with him:

*and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what [is] this that goeth forth*; either out of the temple or out of heaven, into some open place, where it might be seen.

**Ver. 6.** *And I said, What [is] it?* etc.] After he had lifted up his eyes and seen it, he desires to know both what it was, and what was the meaning of it:

*and he said, This [is] an ephah that goeth forth*; which was a measure much in use with the Jews, (<sup>1266</sup>Exodus 16:36 <sup>1896</sup>Leviticus 19:36 <sup>1817</sup>Ruth 2:17) it is the same with the “bath”, and held above seven wine gallons. The Targum interprets this of such who dealt in false measures, whose sin is exposed, and their punishment set forth; but rather it designs the measure of iniquity filling up, either in Judea, particularly in the times of Christ, (<sup>4232</sup>Matthew 23:32) or in the whole world, and especially in the antichristian states, (<sup>6816</sup>Revelation 18:5,6): and

*He said moreover, this [is] their resemblance through all the earth*; or “this is their eye”<sup>f97</sup>; what they are looking at, and intent upon, namely, this ephah; that is, to fill up the measure of their iniquity: or, as Kimchi and Ben Melech interpret it, this ephah, which thou seest, shows that there is an eye upon them which sees their works; and this is the eye of the Lord, which sees and takes notice of all the evil actions of men, not as approving them, but as observing them, and avenging them. Cocceius, by the “ephah”, understands an abundance of temporal good things bestowed upon the Christian church in Constantine’s time and following, on which the eyes of carnal men were looking.

**Ver. 7.** *And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead*, etc.] By the angel; since he is afterwards said to cast it upon the mouth of the “ephah”. A cicar, or talent of silver, with the Jews, was equal to three thousand shekels, as may be gathered from (<sup>12324</sup>Exodus 38:24-26) and weighed a hundred and twenty five pounds<sup>f98</sup>; or, as others, a hundred and twenty<sup>f99</sup>, and, according to the more exact account of Dr. Arbuthnot, a hundred and thirteen pounds, ten ounces, one pennyweight, and ten and two seventh grains of our Troy weight. A Babylonish talent, according to Aelianus<sup>f100</sup>,

weighed seventy two Attic pounds; and an Attic mina, or pound, weighed a hundred drachmas; so that it was of the weight of seven thousand two hundred such drachmas. An Alexandrian talent was equal to twelve thousand Attic drachmas; and these the same with a hundred and twenty five Roman libras or pounds; which talent is supposed to be the same with that of Moses. The Roman talent contained seventy two Italic minas, which were the same with the Roman libras<sup>f101</sup>. But since the Hebrew word “cicar” signifies anything plain, and what is extended like a cake, as Arias Montanus observes<sup>f102</sup>, it may here intend a plate of lead, which was laid over the mouth of the “ephah”, as a lid unto it; though indeed it is afterwards called **trpw[ ̂ba**, “a stone of lead”, and so seems to design a weight.

*And this [is] a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah;* who, in (<sup><38B></sup>Zechariah 5:8), is called “wickedness”; and here represented by a “woman”, because, say some, the woman was first in the transgression; or rather because sin is flattering and deceitful, and draws into the commission of it, and so to ruin: and this woman, wickedness, intends wicked men; all the wicked among the Jews, and even all the wicked of the world; who sit in the “ephah”, very active and busy in filling up the measure of their sins, and where they sit with great pleasure and delight; very openly and visibly declare their sin, as Sodom, and hide it not; in a very proud and haughty manner, with great boldness and impudence, and in great security, without any concern about a future state, promising themselves impunity here and hereafter. This woman is a very lively emblem of the whore of Rome, sitting as a queen upon many waters; ruling over kings and princes; living deliciously, and in great ease and pleasure filling up the measure of her sins. Kimchi interprets this woman of the ten tribes, who wickedly departed from God, and were as one kingdom.

**Ver. 8.** *And he said, This [is] wickedness*, etc.] A representation of wicked men, who are wickedness itself, as their inward part is, (<sup><38B></sup>Psalm 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”; **ο ανομοος**, that wicked lawless one, (<sup><38B></sup>2 Thessalonians 2:8) yea, wickedness itself, being extremely wicked, a sink of sin and of all abominations, (<sup><67B></sup>Revelation 17:5 18:2).

*And he cast it into the midst of the ephah*; that is, wickedness; that it might be kept within bounds, and not exceed its measure to be filled up: this seems to denote some restraint on sinners, that they may not be able to go all the lengths they would; and some rebuke upon them, that they might not lift up their heads with impunity; and some check upon them, and their furious rage towards the people of God; and also the putting of an utter end to sin and sinners, and particularly the followers of antichrist; (see ~~1945~~ Psalm 104:35).

*And he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof*; either upon the mouth of the woman, or of the ephah; and, be it which it will, it was done to keep the woman within the ephah, and press her down there; and intends the judgments of God upon sinners; and shows that there is no escaping divine vengeance; that it falls heavy where it lights, and sinks to the lowest hell; and that it will continue, being laid on by the firm, unchangeable, and irrevocable decree of God. Cocceius understands this of the Saracens and Turks, and the barbarous nations, being cast into the Roman empire, to restrain the antichristian tyranny; but it seems better to apply it to the utter destruction of antichrist, signified by a millstone cast into the sea and sunk there, never to rise more; (see ~~1682~~ Revelation 18:21) and with it compare (~~1250~~ Exodus 15:10).

**Ver. 9.** *Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked*, etc.] This is not a new vision, but a continuation of the former, as appears from the “ephah” seen in it:

*and, behold, there came out two women*; out of the same place the “ephah” did. The Targum explains these “two women” by two provinces; and Kimchi interprets them of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who had been carried captive into Babylon; and others of the two kings, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, who were the cause of the captivity; but Jarchi understands by them the Babylonians and Chaldeans, two nations as one, joined in Nebuchadnezzar’s armies, which carried them captive: others think the two reformers, Ezra and Nehemiah, are meant, who were instruments of purging the Jews, returned from captivity, though but weak ones, and therefore are compared to “women”; yet what they did they did swiftly, and therefore are said to have “wings”, and under the influence of the Spirit of God; hence the “wind”, or “spirit”<sup>f103</sup>, is said to be in their wings; and they acted from a tender regard to the glory of God and the good of their country; and therefore their wings were like the “wings of a stork”; a

bird of passage, as appears from (<sup>-2487-</sup>Jeremiah 8:7) and so a fit emblem to be used in the transportation of the “ephah”; of whom Pliny<sup>f104</sup> says, from whence they come, and whither they betake themselves, is yet unknown; and adds, there is no doubt that they come from afar; as it is plain they must, if that relation be true, which seems to have good authority, that one of these creatures, upon its return to Germany, brought a green root of ginger with it; which must come from the eastern part of the world; from Arabia, or Ethiopia, or the East Indies, where it grows<sup>f105</sup>: and as it is a bird that takes such long flights, it must have wings fitted for such a purpose; and which are taken notice of in (<sup>-1891-</sup>Job 39:13) to which the wings and feather of the ostrich are compared; for so Bochart<sup>f106</sup> there renders the word, “the wing of the ostriches rejoices, truly the wing” as of “a stork, and the feather”; or, as others, “who gave wings to the stork and ostrich?” both remarkable for their wings: and Vatablus renders the word here an “ostrich”; which, according to Pliny<sup>f107</sup>, is the largest of birds, and almost as big as a beast. In Ethiopia and Africa they are taller than a horse and his rider, and exceed the horse in swiftness; and their wings seem to be given them to help them in running; but which are not sufficient to lift them much above the earth, and so can not be meant here; but rather the stork, whose wings are black and white; and when they fly, they stretch out their necks forwards, and their feet backwards, and with these direct their course; when a tempest rises, standing on both feet, they spread their wings, lay their bill upon their breast, and turn their face that way the storm comes<sup>f108</sup>. The Targum renders it an eagle, which is the swiftest of birds, and whose wings are very strong to bear anything upon them, as they do their young, to which the allusion is, (<sup>-4521-</sup>Deuteronomy 32:11) and so, if meant here, to lift up and bear away the ephah between the earth and the heaven; but the word is never used of that bird. The Harpies or Furies, with the Heathens, are represented, as women having wings<sup>f109</sup> as these women are said to have; but these are very different women from them. Though some think the Romans, under Vespasian and Titus, are intended; but it may be that the two, perfections of God, his power and justice, in punishing men for their sins, are meant, particularly in the last times, and at the day of judgment. The power of God will be seen in raising the dead; in bringing all to judgment; in separating the wicked from the righteous, and in the execution of the sentence denounced on them: and the justice of God will be very conspicuous in the judgment and destruction of them.

*And the wind [was] in their wings*; they had wings, as denoting swiftness, as angels are said to have; hence Maimonides, as Kimchi observes, thought that angels are here meant; but this denotes, that though God is longsuffering, and may seem to defer judgment, which is sometimes a stumbling to the righteous, and a hardening to the wicked; yet, as this is only for the salvation of his elect, so when once the time is up, and the commission given forth, power and justice will speedily execute the sentence: and the “wind” being in their wings shows the greater swiftness and speed in the dispatch of business, and the great strength and force with which they performed it:

*for they had wings like the wings of a stork*; which, being a creature kind and tender, show that there is no cruelty in the displays of the power and justice of God in punishing sinners:

*and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven*; which denotes the visibility of the whole measure of the sins of wicked men; they will all be made manifest, and brought into judgment: and also the visibility of their punishment; they will go into everlasting punishment, in the sight of angels and men; and which will be the case of the antichristian beast, (<sup>6678</sup>Revelation 17:8).

**Ver. 10.** *Then said I to the angel that talked with me*; etc.] This the prophet said after he had seen the “ephah” come forth; the woman, wickedness, cast into it, and the talent of lead upon her; and the two women lifting up the ephah between heaven and earth:

*Whither do these bear the ephah?* he neither asks what the ephah signified, nor who were the women that bore it, but only whither they bore it.

**Ver. 11.** *And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar*, etc.] That is, in the province of Babylon, as the Targum paraphrases it; for Babel, or Babylon, was in the land of Shinar, (<sup>0100</sup>Genesis 10:10 11:2) whither the Jews were carried captive, (<sup>27002</sup>Daniel 1:2) (<sup>23111</sup>Isaiah 11:11), and the bearing of the “ephah” thither may denote the cause of their captivity, the measure of sins filled up by them: though this some understand of the like injuries, oppressions, and vexations, brought upon the Chaldeans in the land of Shinar, which they before exercised towards and upon the Jews; and others of the rejection of wicked men from among the Jews, by Ezra and Nehemiah, transporting them as it were back to Babylon again: others of the dispersion of the Jews by the Romans, who



chiefly settled after that in the eastern parts of the world; though indeed the whole world was a land of Shinar, or “shaking out”<sup>f110</sup> unto them; they being shook out of their own land, and scattered about everywhere; which dispersion has been long and lasting, notorious and conspicuous; and they are now settled upon their own base, established upon their former principles of legality and self-righteousness, and rejection of the true Messiah; or rather this may be understood of the transfer of the ephah, or whole measure of iniquity, into mystical Babylon. The antichristian church of Rome is called Babylon; she is represented as a sink of sin, a mystery of iniquity, (~~REV~~ Revelation 17:5) and a house being built for this man of sin, antichrist, denotes the continuance of him; and being established on its own base, shows the false foundation on which the church of Rome is built, and her carnal security. So Cocceius, by the “two women”, understands the two kingdoms or powers of antichrist, the civil and ecclesiastical powers; which support the man of sin, lift him up, and give him the highest place in the church, and fix his seat where idolatry and persecution reign, as formerly did in Babylon, in the land of Shinar. Though the whole may very well be applied to the last and everlasting punishment of sin and sinners, when the whole measure is filled up. The end of sin and sinners is death and everlasting destruction. The ephah, and the woman in it, are carried, not upwards to heaven, nor to the New Jerusalem, but to the land of Shinar, the land of shaking; to hell, where are utter darkness, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth; where a house is built for them, which denotes their continuance there; and which, being established on its own base, shows their punishment shall forever remain; their worm never dies; their fire is not quenched; the smoke of it ascends for ever and ever; their destruction is an everlasting destruction.