

I. Chapter 5:5-11

1. Sin Before God: A Systematized, Universal Reality

The ephah basket symbolizes the pattern of the world's commercial order.

Scripture: Zechariah 5:6 "This is the likeness of wickedness all through the land."

The ephah was originally a measuring vessel for commerce, representing humanity's economic and transactional system. When the vision declares it is "the likeness of wickedness over all the land," it no longer refers merely to individual sinful acts, but to a structured way of life spread across the whole earth. Sin is therefore no longer only a behavioral issue, but has woven itself into the logic of societal operation, becoming the very pattern of this world.

Spiritually, this reveals that sin expands from the personal level to the systemic level. Commerce, trade and exchange are neutral in themselves; yet once dominated by greed, fraud and the values of mammon, they form a worldly order that appears normal on the surface but is fundamentally corrupt at its core.

2. God Restrains the Expansion of Sin in His Sovereignty

The leaden cover signifies God's divine restraint and the principle of the Restrainer.

Scripture: Zechariah 5:7-8 "And a leaden weight was lifted and placed over the mouth of the ephah."

The heavy leaden cover represents a binding limitation that cannot be easily removed. Though wickedness exists, it is not permitted to spread without bound. In God's sovereignty, sin is assigned fixed boundaries and cannot exceed the limits He ordains.

This principle is further clarified in the New Testament.

Parallel New Testament Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 "And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time... for the mystery of

lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way."

Paul teaches that the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, yet it cannot be fully manifested because a divine restraining power holds it back. This aligns perfectly with the leaden cover in Zechariah: sin is not absent, but confined within the bounds God has set.

2 Thessalonians 2:8 further reveals that the lawless one will be revealed at the appointed time—proving even the timing of sin's manifestation is under God's sovereign control.

Synthesized spiritual principle: God restricts sin both in spatial expansion (the leaden cover) and timely manifestation (the Restrainer). Sin operates but is not free; it is active but never unchecked; it advances yet remains bounded by God's sovereignty.

3. The Swift Transference of Systemic Wickedness

In the vision of Zechariah 5:9, the prophet lifted up his eyes and saw two women coming forth, with the wind in their wings, flying swiftly, lifting up the ephah vessel. The most prominent emphasis of this scene is not that the expansion of sin is depicted as runaway growth, but rather a supreme speed of movement and efficiency of execution.

The text deliberately uses the phrase wings with the wind to convey a driving force beyond natural velocity. It reveals that the movement of this sinful system is rapid, decisive, and unstoppable.

From the structure of the vision, the focus lies in transference, not mere spreading. The systemic wickedness represented by the ephah does not dissipate or develop gradually in its original place. Instead, under the arrangement of God's sovereignty, it is swiftly carried away from its present position into the next stage of God's dealing.

Thus, speed here serves as a key spiritual symbol: it does not denote chaotic acceleration, but signifies that within the historical course permitted by God, the sinful system is propelled rapidly toward its predetermined end.

Wind throughout Scripture often symbolizes invisible yet mighty

movement—such as the working of the Spirit or the sovereign propulsion of God. Therefore, wings like the wind do not highlight natural chaos, but an unseen driving power that advances this system speedily along a set course to complete its relocation. In other words, this swiftness is not random dispersion, but guided rapid execution.

From this verse we derive a core spiritual principle: When a system is judged by God and enters the stage of His dealing, its course is no longer one of slow evolution. Instead, it is speedily brought into its final destined place. The focus is not on how sin spreads, but on how God accelerates the progression of history, bringing systemic wickedness quickly to its spiritual consummation.

4. Separation and Divine Preservation in the Age of Grace

In the age of grace, God's foundational principle is not to utterly destroy His enemies, but to separate and preserve His own people. Though the vision in Zechariah 5:5–11 belongs to the Old Testament era, the spiritual truth it reveals remains fully valid for the New Testament church age. God does not completely abolish the working of Satan and his evil system in this present age; instead, He restrains and sets boundaries upon wickedness, while calling His people to live a life sanctified and set apart unto Himself.

This truth is clearly seen in the Lord Jesus' prayer in John chapter 17. He did not pray for the Father to take believers out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one, and to sanctify them through God's truth. Here lies a vital spiritual tension: God does not remove believers from the worldly environment, but He calls them to be delivered from the influence and dominion of the evil one, and to be sanctified by the word of truth. This reveals God's sovereign strategy: He does not eliminate the fallen world environment, but separates His own people within it and preserves them from being conformed to the world.

The leaden cover in Zechariah's vision symbolizes God's restraint over the system of sin, rather than its immediate and total elimination. Carried over into the New Testament, this principle stands unchanged: though Satan still operates in the world, he is confined by God's sovereignty and will ultimately be driven out of his

permitted sphere of activity. Scripture commands in the Book of James to resist the devil, and he will flee from believers. First Peter also exhorts believers to be sober and vigilant, for the devil roams about like a roaring lion, and believers are to stand against him with steadfast faith.

These verses establish a crucial spiritual reality: the calling of believers in the world is not to eradicate darkness by human effort, but to abide in God's light and stand firm to resist darkness. The true meaning of sanctification in Scripture is never merely an abstract improvement of morality, but spiritual separation from the world's system. The worldly system, rooted in mammon, self-centeredness and corruption, belongs to the order of Babylon; the kingdom of God is grounded in truth, life, and God as the center of all things. Believers are called to dwell in the same earthly environment, yet no longer belong to the world's value and operational system.

As exhorted in 2 Corinthians, God's people are to come out from among unbelievers and be separate. This "coming out" is not a physical escape from the world, but a fundamental transformation of spiritual identity and allegiance: believers are in the world, yet not of the world; they live in earthly surroundings, but no longer follow the world's trends and fallen order.

Looking to the full framework of Zechariah chapter 5, we see a complete spiritual pattern: systemic wickedness, represented by the ephah vessel, remains present in the world. Sin continues to operate, yet it is always bounded and restrained by God's sovereign hand like the leaden cover. In the end, God will bring the sinful system back to its spiritual origin in Babylon, consigning it to its destined judgment. God's people, by contrast, are called to break free from the bondage of the world's system and walk in the spiritual order of God's kingdom.

The core principle may be summed up clearly: In the age of grace, God does not instantly and completely wipe out the works and operation of Satan. Instead, He limits the spread of wickedness and calls His people into a sanctified life. The spiritual walk of believers is not to physically leave the world, but to have a heart and identity no longer belonging to the worldly system; it is not to strive to eliminate darkness, but to abide in God's light, maintain spiritual separation, and live a life of holiness.

The Full Spiritual Trajectory of the Babylonian System

In the event of the Tower of Babel in Genesis chapter 11, people said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves.” This moment marks the origin of the Babylonian system—a self-centered human movement of self-ascension. Mankind sought to reach heaven by their own ability, technology, and collective unity. At its core, they endeavored to establish a unified human system that operates independently of God.

God’s response to this system was to confuse their language and scatter the people abroad. This reveals a vital spiritual principle: whenever humanity attempts to build a self-centered unified system apart from God, God restrains its expansion and breaks its power of self-integration. From the very beginning, Babylon is not merely a geographical place, but a systemic logic of humanity living in independence from God.

In the vision of Zechariah chapter 5, the Babylonian system is revealed, limited, and assigned to its spiritual origin. The ephah basket symbolizes the world’s commercial and transactional system, and the woman seated inside is explicitly identified as “Wickedness.” This shows that the core of this worldly system has been corrupted by greed, fraud, and the lust of mammon. The focus here is not on individual sinful acts, but on the formation of an entrenched structural system of wickedness upon the earth.

The leaden cover placed over the mouth of the ephah represents God’s sovereign restraint, preventing evil from expanding infinitely or being fully unleashed. This divine restriction does not eliminate sin immediately; instead, it confines wickedness within the boundaries ordained by God until the appointed time of further judgment.

Afterward, two women lift the ephah and carry it away to the land of Shinar. This process is not the uncontrolled spreading of sin, but a divinely sovereign transference. The system defined as wickedness is carried back to its spiritual source—Babylon. In other words, God does not allow the sinful system to expand freely. Rather, throughout the course of history, He categorizes, positions, and guides systemic

wickedness toward its final destined judgment.

Revelation chapter 18 unveils the ultimate manifestation and judgment of the Babylonian system. Here, “Babylon the Great” is fully revealed as a mature global system, embracing not only economic and commercial structures but also an integrated order of culture, worldly power, and spiritual corruption. The Scripture describes her as “a dwelling place for demons and a haunt for every unclean spirit,” indicating that Babylon has developed into a fully systematized worldly order rooted in moral and spiritual decay.

At the height of its influence, God’s judgment falls upon her, and she is utterly overthrown in a single day. This final outcome perfectly aligns with the vision in Zechariah 5: the system once restrained and transferred throughout history finally enters the stage of public judgment and irreversible termination in the Book of Revelation.

When we unite these three passages, we behold the complete spiritual trajectory of the Babylonian system. In Genesis 11, the Babylonian system is founded as a self-centered human movement of self-exaltation. In Zechariah 5, this system is exposed in its nature, bounded by God’s sovereignty, and assigned back to its spiritual origin. In Revelation 18, the system reaches full maturity and faces its ultimate judgment.

This entire timeline reveals not a chaotic course of human history, but a process fully under God’s sovereign control: originating in human self-centeredness, advancing as a systemic order in the world, being categorized and transferred by God’s sovereignty, and finally coming to its consummation in divine judgment and eternal end.