

Zech 5:1-11

Intro

This is already the 6th and the 7th visions

Intriguing to note is that in all the visions God has the action

He will fix Israel and Jerusalem

In his grace

And Israel / Jerusalem or the community is just receiving it

The punishment of the exile was enough

Now that the people have returned

God goes further and also 'cleanses' the community of the things that are still wrong with it.

This despite the intro in Ch1 urging the people of Israel to repent

This is not repeated at all in the visions

Justice and Love go together

6th Vision: The Flying Scroll

We see this concept in the 6th vision: the Flying Scroll

It is a large scroll - 9m by 4.5 m or 30 ft x 15ft

And it is just there - it flies over the land

On the Scroll there is a curse written and the curse is over the whole land

The curse is there, because there are people in Israel who steal and lie (or swear falsely)

The writing on the scroll cuts those people off from Israel / Jerusalem

But at the moment of the vision the curse is over the whole land and it affects therefore all the people

Even those who do not lie or swear falsely

In other parts of the Bible, swearing at all is frowned up

Let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no"

^ Matt 5:33-37

And so Christians appearing in court as witnesses may ask not to swear on the Bible,

Because we are told not to swear at all

We are told to tell the truth at all times

But here the falsely swearing is highlighted

Basically it would accuse someone falsely of doing wrong

Or exonerate someone. even if they have

done wrong

God steps in

From vs 4 God himself gives the explanation of the vision

He says that he has sent it out

But instead of affecting the whole land, it will punish those who swear falsely or who steal

The curse would not affect the persons, but it will destroy their possessions

And in that way God will remove the injustice from the land

And restore justice to the land

Justice that is based on the holiness code in Leviticus: You shall love your neighbour as yourself

^ Lev 19:18

7th Vision: The Woman in a basket

The seventh vision brings out a basket

This is a measuring basket - called an ephah

An ephah is a dry volume measure, it could be jar or a basket or a box

It is a tenth of a homer

And around 23 liters

Different sources give different values

Ruth for instance collected an ephah of

For instance collected an ephah of barley

Similarly, the ephah has a lead disk or a 'kikkar'

^ Translated as cover

A 'kikkar' is also a word used to describe a 'talent' - a weight of about 65 pounds

For measuring money or metals on a scale

According to the law an honest ephah also requires honest scales and "stones"

³⁵ “Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity.³⁶ Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt.

^ Lev 19:35-36

These are therefore common standards and for trade and payment of wages

And if dishonest measures are used again it leads to cheating and injustice

It again goes against the Loving your Neighbour instruction

However these measures are called 'their inequity'

It is the result of the lying, cheating and stealing of the people that were held to justice in the 6th vision

their inequity'

And the measures contain a woman called 'Wickedness' or 'haris'- a direct

denial of the holiness code

this term is often associated of the
wickedness of the nations

^ Deut 9:4-5

4 After the Lord your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, “The Lord has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness.” No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is going to drive them out before you. **5** It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Or with the abominations of worshipping
false gods in Ezekiel 5:11

11 Therefore, as I live, says the Lord God, surely, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations—therefore I will cut you down; my eye will not spare, and I will have no pity.

And also in Jeremiah 7:9-10

9 Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, **10** and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, ‘We are safe!’—
only to go on doing all these abominations?

Again it is God who takes action in the
vision of Zechariah

He puts wickedness back into the false
basket and seals it with the false talent

Two women then take the closed
basket to Shinar, which is in Babylon

BASKET TO SHIMAI - WHICH IS IN BABYLON

Where it will be venerated

It is as if God is saying: this is where the injustice of false measures, false swearing and stealing belongs

In a land that is not chosen by God

But here in Israel/Jerusalem there is no place for it

Why two women?

Perhaps these are associated to the worship in the temple of the "Queen of heaven"

18 The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink-offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger

^ Jer 7:18

And it seems that women took charge in this worship of this deity in the Temple

This queen of heaven is referred to in the same passage in Jeremiah as the earlier mentioned abominations in Jer 7: 10

So maybe it indicates that not only the practices of false measures, swearing and stealing is removed, but also the worship of of these practices is removed from Israel

Conclusion

In both these vision, it is God who takes action

Who cleanses the land from current and past evil practices

It is God who takes back his people again and weeds out what is wrong and restores the people and the land to His standards of Holiness

What should we take away from these two visions in Zechariah?

It is clear that God abhors false swearing, stealing and inequity

He removes it from the Land that he has chosen

He is proactive about it, he takes charge

Our God loves justice, not only for his own sake, but because injustice goes against the holiness code of Loving your Neighbour as yourself

With honest measures and truth we ensure that no one is hurt, including ourselves

Sometimes we think we love people if we pay them more than they earn

But if you cannot afford that yourself then you hurt yourself

And you may become resentful

It is probably better to just give, instead of paying over and above what is required

But what about our buying practices?

practices:

Although we have rules and standards, most people want to try to skimp on these when they can

How can I pay less than what it is fair

Initiatives like fairtrade are there to ensure that the workers that produce our coffee, tea, chocolate, cotton are giving an honest income

Not a price that is dictated by world markets, who are using the removal of the local market to put undercharge many of the producers

Not too much, but also not too little

Where do our clothes come from?

What did they cost to make, and what did we pay for them

It is difficult for us to check the whole supply chain, but institutions like Fair Trade do do that

But then what about our own land?

We see injustices everywhere, even if we do not involve ourselves with that

But it is God who punishes and removes these injustices

What can we do then?

Maybe we should pray for our nation, that God will do the same here, as he did in Zechariah's time for Israel?

Amen

