



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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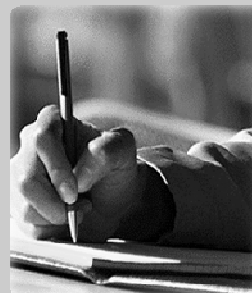


God's Big Plan For A Struggling People 3/6
HG130: Finishing The Building

Zechariah 5 and 6

Home Group Study Notes

9 October 2016 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

What is the hardest thing you have ever done?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



God's Big Plan For A Struggling People 3/6
HG130: Finishing The Building

Zechariah 5 and 6

Home Group Sermon Notes

9 October 2016 - Revd Paul A. Carr

Introduction It's said that former Prime Minister Harold Wilson attended church without his wife. When he returned home, she asked him what the minister had talked about. "Sin," he replied. "What did the preacher say about sin?" his wife persisted. Wilson replied, "He was against it." The late evangelist, Billy Sunday, said, "I'm against sin. I'll kick it as long as I've got a foot, and I'll fight it as long as I've got a fist. I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth. And when I'm toothless, I'll gum it 'til I go home to Glory, and it goes home to perdition." In a nutshell God is against sin, too - as we see from these two chapters.

1. The Power of the Spirit to Reveal Sin, 5:1-4 Thinking back to 4:6: "*Not by strength or by might, but by My Spirit*" these last two visions expand on the theme of the power of God's Spirit to work in the lives of His people. In the sixth vision, recorded in 5:1-4, the prophet sees a flying scroll, which represents the power of the Spirit to reveal sin. The Hebrew scroll is described as 20 cubits long and 10 cubits wide, which is roughly 30 feet long and 15 feet wide. It's a bit like when you're sunning yourself on the beach and a plane flies by towing a huge banner behind it, encouraging you to go to a drink at a certain pub or eat at a certain restaurant. I never did find the one called: Mandy will you marry me! In much the same way, this scroll is flying over the land and is impossible to ignore.

Words are written all over the scroll declaring the charges of God against His people. On one side, the scroll describes their theft, and it promises to remove the thieves from the land. The other side of the scroll lists their acts of deception, and it promises God's curse for all the people's lies. Warren Wiersbe suggests that the reason the Lord selected only two Commandments, stealing and swearing falsely, was because: *The third commandment is the central commandment on the first tablet of the Law, and the eighth commandment is the central commandment on the second tablet of the law, so these two commandments represent the whole law.*

The flying scroll is a reminder that evil offends a Holy God. He looks, He knows, He cares, and He judges when God's people cheat one another or steal or fail to tell the truth. "But whoever shall keep the whole law, yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). If, while driving down the motorway, I'm pulled over by a policeman because I'm speeding, does it make any difference to him that I haven't broken the income tax laws or stolen anything from my neighbours? Obedience to one law doesn't negate disobedience to another law. To break one is to become a lawless person. When students who are believers cheat on a test, God knows and cares. When a Christian businessperson takes unfair advantage of a client, God knows and cares. When Christian husbands and wives deceive each other or break the covenant of their marriage, God knows and cares. Without passing judgment on any of these, I would simply point out that if we determine morality by popular opinion, we will drift downstream with our godless culture.

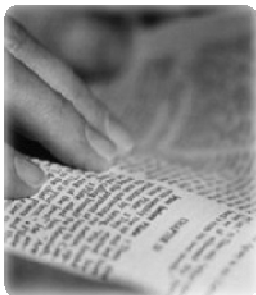
4: Should believers fear God's judgment in any sense? (Consider 1 Cor. 3:10-15 & 2 Cor. 5:9-11.)

5: What practical steps can followers of Christ take to experience the power and hope of the Holy Spirit in their lives each day?

6: How would your life change if you were *totally* committed to building God's temple (the church)?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Would we be aware of our sins without the work of the Holy Spirit? Why or why not? What verses or passages of Scripture support your answer?

2: How can we be hard on sin without becoming harsh, unkind, and judgmental? Where is the balance between mercy and judgment?

3: In Zechariah's vision, sin was carried away from Jerusalem, where it did not belong, to Babylon, where it was given a place of honour. In what ways is sin honoured in our culture today?

The large flying scroll represents God's knowledge of the people's guilt and the promise of His swift judgment for the sin of the people, banishing thieves from the land and destroying the house of those who swear falsely by His name. We can thank God, though, that His Spirit does not simply reveal our sin and leave us to deal with the guilt and the consequences.

2. The Power of the Spirit to Remove Sin, 5:5-11 If the Holy Spirit only convicted us of sin, He would leave us miserable all the time. Zechariah's seventh vision shows what God's Spirit does after He reveals our sin - and the symbolism is fairly straightforward. The angel shows Zechariah a basket that represents the wickedness of the people. The container is an ephah, a large barrel or basket that was used for measurement, a tool for commerce, symbolizes the injustice of the people in using false measurements. They were cheating one another and being dishonest in business (Prior to the exile, Amos decried the same type of dishonesty in 8:4-7). Even after the return from Babylon, dishonesty was still a problem among the Jews. The Prophet Haggai rebuked them for putting their own interests ahead of the Lord's work (Hag. 1:1-11), and certainly robbing God was a grievous sin among the Jews a century later (Mal. 3:7-15).

When the leaden cover of the basket is removed, Zechariah discovers a woman inside the basket. The woman is called 'wickedness.' The woman is forced back down into the basket and sealed into the container with the lead weight vs8, then, two unidentified women with wings like those of a stork pick up the basket containing the woman. Whether these winged women are instruments of evil or of good is debatable. The stork is an unclean animal (Lev 11: 19; Deut 14:18). Their actions toward the woman could be interpreted as protecting her. Yet, these creatures are doing the work of God in removing wickedness from the land.

The winged women carry the woman in the basket through the air to Babylon where the basket is placed on a pedestal in a shrine. Interestingly, it was at Shinar where people tried to build the Tower of Babel in Gen 11:1-9. Babylon is not just the place of Israel's exile. It also represents sin, idolatry, rebellion, and wickedness and a system proudly opposed to God. The book of Revelation contains a prophecy equating Babylon in the last days with a religious and political world system based on rebellion against God (Rev 17-18). So, from the beginning to the end of Bible, Babylon signifies sin. And I guess the idea in this vision is that wickedness has a home, even a place of honour, in Babylon.

This vision communicates a clear message that God was promising to take the guilt, iniquity, and wickedness of His people and carry it away from His presence in Jerusalem and confine it to its natural habitat, Babylon. From an eschatological (end times) perspective, removing wickedness and idolatry from Jerusalem and returning it to Babylon is part of God's final judgment as described in Rev 17-18. The removal of idolatry prepares Israel for the second coming of Christ, the final conflict between God and all the nations of the earth, with Babylon at the centre, Rev 19-20.

I never cease to be amazed at the strange fascination which Bible prophecy holds for people who have no other interest in the things of God. Christians also are fascinated by Biblical prophecy, too. Announce a conference on prophecy and you'll pack an auditorium. Change the subject to prayer, missions, or spiritual life, and you'll have to beg people to attend. The number-one best seller of the 1970's was Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. The past few years have seen Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins' "Left Behind" series dominate the best-seller lists. But the more I study Biblical prophecy, the less certain I am about the details! I was trained under the dispensational, pre-millennial, pre-tribulation rapture view. But since my Theological College days, I have read many books by scholars who do not agree on how the end times will play out. And so, while I am certain that Jesus Christ is coming back bodily and that He is going to conquer every enemy and reign in power and glory (*every* Bible-believing Christian must hold to these facts), I am less certain about the specifics of how it all works out.

I'm convinced that God did *not* put prophecy into the Bible so that we could *speculate* about all the details. Rather, He gave it so that we would *submit* ourselves to the lordship of the coming Saviour. So my aim in this message is *not* to satisfy your curiosity about the end times, but rather to bring each of you into total surrender to the coming King-Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The sixth and seventh visions of Zechariah are a reminder that God's Spirit has the power to remove the darkest sin. And putting these visions together creates a picture of the convicting and cleansing work of the Spirit. In the flying scroll we can see how the Holy Spirit reveals the sinfulness of His people. In the woman of wickedness in the basket, flown back to Babylon, we can see how the Holy Spirit removes the sin from God's presence.

According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit works even in the lives of unbelievers, as the Spirit convicts the world about "sin, righteousness, and judgment" (John 16:8). For Christians, the Holy Spirit not only cleanses and removes sin at the time of salvation (1 Cor 6: 11), but He continues to produce the fruit of God's holiness in our lives (Gal 5:22-23) and transforms us into the image of Jesus (2 Cor 3: 18). By the Spirit, believers are able to "put to death the deeds of the body" and live holy lives (Rom 8:13). No matter how hard we may try, we cannot cover our sin or deny our sinful nature. It will eventually awake from its sleep and devour us. Were it not for the saving grace of Jesus, sin would eat us alive. But, praise God, His Spirit can convict us of our sin and guilt, and then He can take the guilt and shame of sin away from us!

His Spirit can deliver us from the power of sin and temptation. There's no sin that Jesus Christ didn't die for. There's no sin that His resurrection did not conquer. There's no sin from which the power of the Holy Spirit cannot deliver us. Many times God takes sin away from us on a day-by-day basis as we walk with Him. He teaches us to trust in the power of His Spirit for daily deliverance from sin's power in our lives.

3. The Power of the Spirit to Renew Hope, 6:1-15 Chapter 6 brings us to Zechariah's eighth vision, which seems to indicate that God's justice was brought to the wicked nations that have oppressed Israel and God acts to give hope to His people. The prophet sees four chariots coming out from two mountains. Some have speculated that these could be Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives - both significant places in the Jewish faith.

It is hard to understand why the mountains would be described as being made of bronze, since mountains in Jerusalem are made of limestone. Bronze, however, is often used in Scripture to depict the sureness and resoluteness of God's judgment. For instance, the bronze altar in Exodus 27:2 and the bronze snake in Numbers 21:9 both speak of God's judgment on sin. Likewise, Jesus is described as having feet of bronze in Revelation 1:15 and 2:18 as He stands in judgment over His churches.

We read that powerful horses draw the chariots that come from between the two bronze mountains. The horses are reminiscent of the ones described in the first vision (1:8-9), though the colours of the horses are not the same in the two visions. These horses are red, black, white, and dappled (6:2-3). When Zechariah asks what the horses and chariots are, the interpreting angel explains that they are "the four spirits of heaven going out." Walter Kaiser notes that the horses bear a strong resemblance to the four horsemen in Rev 6:1-8 and suggests that the red horse indicates martyrdom, white stands for victory, black stands for famine, and dappled symbolizes death. However, the context seems to indicate these are angelic spirits sent from the Lord to go throughout the earth.

The chariots are going north and south, each direction representing enemies faced by God's people. The chariots pulled by the black and white horses go to the north, referring to Babylon, while the dappled horses travelled to the south, which represents Egypt (vs6).

Though no specific mention is made of the direction of the red horses, all of the horses and their chariots go out to exert God's sovereignty over the nations. Following these patrols, the Lord Himself speaks in response to the chariots that have gone out to Babylon, vs8: "Look, those going towards the north country have given my Spirit rest in the land of the north" Though God had been angry at the oppressive nations (1:15), His work of judgment has been completed and His Spirit is satisfied.

Because the Lord's wrath against the nations was satisfied, in 6:9-11 God instructs Zechariah to crown Joshua the high priest. The crown was of silver and gold. Joshua's coronation, as Pauline explained a couple of weeks ago, united the priesthood with the monarchy. While there was no precedent in Scripture for a priest to be crowned as a king, the message the Lord gave to Joshua in verses 12-15 explains the reason behind this coronation. Just as the Lord promised to use Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple in ch4, He now specifies how His Spirit will work through Joshua. The prophesy given to Joshua contains promises that are of that period and those that await future fulfilment. While God used Joshua to rebuild the temple in the days of Zechariah, the final realization of these promises from God will come when Jesus establishes the temple described in Ezekiel 40-46. God's message to Joshua includes several promises concerning the Messiah:

- He will build the temple of the Lord (vs12).
- He will be clothed with majesty and glory (vs13).
- He will sit and rule on his throne as a priest (vs13).
- He will unite the role of priest and king, creating "peaceful counsel between the two of them" (vs13).

In Zechariah's day, Joshua's crown would be placed in the completed temple as a remembrance of the men who donated the silver and gold (vs14). Moreover, people from far away-presumably other Jews who were presently in Babylon-would come to complete the construction of the temple as a validation of the Lord's message to Zechariah (vs15). God concluded this vision with a warning: "This will happen if you dutifully obey the Lord your God." These words are evocative of Deuteronomy 11:26-28 when the people are given the choice of blessing or curse - you choose!

Conclusion Years ago I had the opportunity to skipper a yacht, but we just seemed to stay in one place. I remember saying that it was impossible because there was no wind! But regular sailors know how to trim the sails to catch the breeze. They would say: "If you know how to catch the wind, there's almost always enough wind to sail." So it is with the power of the Spirit. There is always enough of Him to keep the wind in the sails of our spiritual lives. None of us has the ability to 'Steer the ship' without him. We sin. We fall short. We lack the power and wisdom to navigate through the sea of life. We miss the best that God has for us. When the Holy Spirit came upon those disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2) they changed from being a disabled and fearful group of followers, to acquiring a dynamic edge to their ministry they'd never experienced before - just as Jesus said they would. The Holy Spirit enabled and guided their ministry and empowered them to fulfil the commission Jesus had given them. The Holy Spirit's power works in the lives of believers to accomplish what we never can on our own. But the question is, are we living as if we believe it? Because it is only then that God can begin to finish building the temple in our lives.

Collect for the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity (9 October) God, the giver of life, whose Holy Spirit wells-up within your Church: by the Spirit's gifts equip us to live the gospel of Christ and make us eager to do your will, that we may share with the whole creation the joys of eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **AMEN.**