

# U.F.O

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well if we could with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this evening, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the book of the prophet Zechariah and chapter 5. Zechariah chapter 5 and I'd like us to look at the whole chapter but if we just read again at verse 1 where Zechariah says, And again I lifted my eyes and saw and behold a flying scroll and he said to me, What do you see? I answered I see a flying scroll its length is 20 cubits and it's width 10 cubits. Then he said to me this is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land for everyone who steals shall be cleaned out according to what is on one side and everyone who swears falsely shall be cleaned out according to what is on the other side and so on.

You know we're all familiar with the acronym UFO which stands for Unidentified Flying Object. It was a term that was coined in 1953 by Edward James Ruppelt. He was an officer in the United States Air Force and it's actually said that he was known for his involvement in writing the Blue Book. Now it's not the Blue Book which we know to be the practice of the Free Church of Scotland but Edward James Ruppelt he was involved in what was called Project Blue Book which was a governmental study of unidentified flying objects and as you know a UFO is a flying object that cannot be immediately identified or explained. They're often associated with extraterrestrial spacecraft or aliens. Now I personally don't think that there are any life forms outside of this world simply because our Bible from its very outset it asserts that the firm to us that mankind is the apex of God's creation. We were created in the image and likeness of God and we were created with dignity, personality and even immortality. We have the opportunity, the promise of eternal life and so I don't believe in aliens but I do believe in UFOs. Maybe not so much flying saucers but certainly unidentified flying objects because there are actually many UFOs mentioned in the Bible and when we come to Zechariah chapter 5 Zechariah witnesses two UFOs in his sixth and seventh vision. Zechariah witnesses two unidentified flying objects, a flying scroll and a flying basket. This evening I'd just like us to consider these two visions with these two UFOs and I'd like us to consider it under two headings, two simple headings cleansing and commitment, cleansing and commitment. So first of all cleansing, cleansing, we'll read from the beginning again. I lifted my eyes and saw and behold a flying scroll and he said to me what do you see? I answered I see a flying scroll, it's length it's 20 cubits and it's width 10 cubits. Then he said to me this is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land for everyone who steals shall be cleaned out according to what is on one side and everyone who swears falsely shall be cleaned out according to what is on the other side. Now as we've discovered in our study of the book of Zechariah, Zechariah was called and commissioned to comfort and challenge God's people with God's word as they began living and looking beyond lockdown. The Israelites as you know they had spent 70 years in lockdown in Babylon because of their rebellion and rejection of the Lord. But now by God's grace this remnant has returned. They've returned to the promised land of Israel and they've returned to rebuild and restore and renew and rededicate their lives to the Lord. And yet as we've seen that wasn't without its problems because after they returned the remnant they left the temple lying derelict and desolate for 15 years. That wasn't until Haggai who was a colleague of Zechariah he issued a call to rebuild and then Zechariah followed with a call to repent. Then only about five months into this restoration project at the temple the Lord spoke to this returned remnant through the Prophet Zechariah and he did so using eight night visions. And the purpose of these night visions was to remind and reassure this return remnant that even though they were unsettled and unsure and even uncertain about their future the Lord was still with them. And in the first vision Zechariah saw King Jesus on a red horse. He was standing among the myrtle trees and he was exhorting and encouraging the church not to give up. In the second vision Zechariah saw four horns which were the four empires that the Lord used in history as part of his perfect plan and purpose for

the people of God and the proclamation of the gospel. Zechariah's third vision was a man with a measuring line and he was assuring the church that even though she may look small and weak and fragile the Lord will be a wall of fire around her and his glory will be in the midst of her. Then Zechariah's fourth vision was a vision of Joshua the high priest who was standing before the Lord with Satan accusing him and Joshua as we saw he was in rags but his rags were removed and then replaced with a robe of righteousness which emphasized the full and free forgiveness of the Lord. Then Zechariah's fifth vision which we considered last Lord's day Zechariah saw a golden lamp stand which was a reminder and reassurance to this church that we're not to despise a day of small things but we're to shine as a light in a dark world and we're to shine not by the might of men not by might not by power but by the spirit of the Lord we're to shine in a dark world and now we come to Zechariah's sixth vision and he sees what we've called a UFO an unidentified flying object or I should call it an

[ 6 : 50 ] IFO it's an identified flying object because Zechariah actually identifies the flying object as a scroll he says I see a flying scroll its length is 20 cubits and it's with 10 cubits now scrolls were often used in the ancient world for recording scripture and recording sin Jeremiah we read that he was commanded to write down on a scroll all that the Lord said to him Ezekiel another prophet he was commanded to eat the scroll and in order in eating the scroll he was to declare all that was written on the scroll so scrolls were used for recording scripture but scrolls were also used for recording sin because when someone transgressed God's law it would be written down by the priests on a leather scroll for everyone to read it and this leather scroll it was made from the hide of an animal and it was called a record of trespass it was a record of trespass but what's interesting is that in order to blot out this record of trespass in order to wipe away all the sin the ink that was used to what to write the record of trespass on this scroll it was wetted with a cloth and wiped off the scroll to make it clean but you know what's interesting is that when you read Numbers chapter 5 we're told that in order to blot out the record of trespass from the scroll in order to blot out the sins transgressions and inequities they could only be blotted out using bitter water and so the priest he would blot out the record of trespass on the scroll using a cloth and bitter water bitter water and a wet cloth and as the water cleansed the scroll and cleared this record of trespass all the sins inequities and transgressions both this bitter water and the ink that was mixing with it it would run down the scroll and the priest would catch it in a cup the priest would catch the bitter water in a cup and then the priest would give the bitter water to the sinner to drink it and the sinner had to drink it in order for the karsh and uncleanness to be taken away and the sinner receive forgiveness but you know what's fascinating about Zechariah scroll is that it was a flying object it was a flying object indicating that it was God's scroll and it was also a very large scroll you could also say it was a god-sized scroll because as we read it was 10 cubits wide and 20 cubits long which means that the scroll it wasn't all rolled up as they often were the scroll here was unrolled and it was open it was an open scroll with a record of trespass written both on the front and on the back but the size of the scroll is significant not least because a scroll would normally be about only about 10 inches wide and nowhere near as long but this flying scroll it was 10 cubits wide and 20 cubits long now a cubit if you remember when we were studying the tabernacle a cubit was the distance between your elbow to the tip of your finger and usually on average you would say a cubit is about 45 centimeters or about 18 inches and so this scroll when you work it out being 10 cubits wide and 20 cubits long it works out at four meters wide

and nine meters long it was a massive scroll in fact the dimension the dimensions of this flying scroll were actually the same dimensions as the holy place in the tabernacle the holy place in the tabernacle you remember that was where the golden lamp stand the table of shorebread and the altar of incense that's where they were all situated and of course the holy place was a significant part of the tabernacle and it was significant to these this this returned remnant because they didn't have a holy place yet they were still trying to rebuild and restore the holy place they were still trying to renew and rededicate their lives to the lord but you know in this flying scroll this return remnant were actually receiving the promise the promise of intercession mediation and representation they were receiving the promise of intercession mediation and representation they had the promise of a priest a priest who would provide cleansing and promote commitment they had the promise of a priest the priest a priest who would provide cleansing and promote commitment and that's what we're told in verse three then he said to me this is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land for everyone who steals shall be cleaned out according to what is on one side and everyone

who swears falsely shall be cleaned out according to what is on the other side so this flying scroll which was the size of the holy place in the tabernacle we're told that it was a massive record of trespass it was a massive record of trespass everything was there written on both sides on the top side and on the bottom side every sin was accounted for every transgression was written every iniquity was noted down and yet the lord promises here that there will be provision of cleansing on both sides the top and the bottom of the scroll and we know that because there's a repeated phrase in verse three it shall be cleaned out it shall be cleaned out literally it means it shall be not guilty it shall be made innocent it shall be free from sin it's going to be wiped away my friend the lord promised his people that a priest would come and provide intercession mediation and representation a priest would provide cleansing by blotting out the record of trespass against sinners a priest would pronounce sinners not guilty he would proclaim their innocence and procure their freedom from sin and you know my friend I love how the bible points us to Jesus you know we come to this old testament book and hidden in this old testament book is Jesus he's here for us to see

Jesus is of course the promised priest who came to provide intercession mediation and representation Jesus is the promised priest who came to provide cleansing by blotting out that massive record of trespass Jesus is the promised priest who dealt with every sin every transgression and every iniquity Jesus my friend he is the promised priest who pronounces sinners not guilty he proclaims sinners that they're innocent and who procures for sinners their freedom my friend Jesus is the promised priest who drank the bitter cup you know as we said in the old testament a priest would he would write the record of trespass on the scroll and when it came to blotting it out he would use the cloth with bitter water and as the water cleansed the scroll and the record of trespass was all wiped away both the bitter water and the the ink they would mix together and then they would drip down and be caught in a cup by the priest and the priest would as we said he would give it to the sinner to drink in order for the carcimum cleanness to be taken away and forgiveness granted but you know when you look at our Jesus in order for all our sin to be blotted out when our scroller of sin and our record of trespass in order for that to be wiped clean and and cleansed we never drank the bitter cup we didn't bear the curse and uncleanness we didn't achieve our own forgiveness and salvation oh the wonder of wonders of Zechariah chapter five is that our promised priest he took the cup of his father's wrath he put it to his lips of grace he drank all of it on our behalf and you know let's never think that that was easy for Jesus to do let's never think that it was easy for our promised priest to bear the record of trespass for our sin let's never think that it was easy for our savior to deal with our curse and our uncleanness because as we're told in Matthew's gospel when Jesus was on his knees in in the

Garden of Gethsemane he was on his knees before his father and we're told he was sweating great drops of blood and his soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death but yet it was there in the Garden of Gethsemane that our Jesus said oh my father oh my father if it be possible let this bitter cup pass from me nevertheless and aren't you so thankful for that nevertheless nevertheless not as I will but as you will not my will but thine be done thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven and he drank the bitter cup and he drank it all to the last drop my friend not a drop was left for us to drink because our promised priest he drank the bitter cup of the father's wrath which was assigned to him in Gethsemane and poured out upon him at Calvary and in that bitter cup was it was what came off our record of trespass it was every sin and every transgression and every iniquity it was every sinful thought every sinful word every sinful deed every sin transgression and iniquity we spoke with our mouth or we wrote in a text message or typed in an email or penned on paper or said to someone we shouldn't have it was all in that bitter cup our karsh and our uncleanness it was our wrath and our hell it was our death and our damnation it was all in that bitter cup and he drank it all to the last drop to the last drop not a drop was left for us to drink my friend so that our scroll our record of trespass could be cleansed and wiped clean and you know it was this imagery that paul was referring to when he wrote to the Colossians then Colossians chapter 2 he says we were dead in our trespasses and sins but God made us alive with Christ forgiving all our trespasses how did he do it paul says by blotting out our record of debt the record of debt that stood against us with all its legal demands this we're told he set aside nailing it to the cross nailing it to the cross you know my friend this is the good news of the gospel because the good news of the gospel is that the promised priest has provided cleansing the promised priest has provided cleansing or as the hymn writer said Jesus paid it all all to him i owe sin has left a crimson stain he washed it white as snow the promised priest has provided cleansing but that same promised priest he calls for commitment he

calls for commitment that's what we see secondly in Zechariah's seventh vision we see commitment so cleansing and then commitment cleansing and commitment so look at verse five then the angel who talked with me came forward and said to me lift your eyes and see what what this is that is going out and i said what is it he said this is a basket that is going out and he said this is their iniquity in all

the land and behold the leaden cover was lifted and there was a wicked woman sitting in the basket and he said this is wickedness and he thrust her back into the basket and thrust down the leaden weight on its opening so there's cleansing and commitment and as many of you know one of my favorite words is commitment because someone who listens to the gospel and loves the gospel and leans upon the gospel of Jesus Christ for salvation they first of all need cleansing but cleansing is conveyed by commitment because after cleansing we've been after we've been cleansed by our promised priest Jesus Christ after we've confessed him as as savior from sin and lord over our life then what we need more than anything else is commitment because cleansing is conveyed by commitment cleansing is conveyed by commitment our response to the cleansing of our promised priest and our responsibility towards our promised priest is our commitment to him therefore we not only need to be cleansed Christians and confessing Christians we also need to be committed Christians we need to be committed Christians when it comes to our witness our workplace and our worship we need to live as cleansed and confessing Christians by demonstrating our commitment and that was the message Zechariah received through his sixth and seventh vision because as a return remnant living and looking beyond lockdown as God's covenant people if the temple was going to be restored and renewed then the people also had to repent and reform if there was going to be restoration and renewal then there also needed to be repentance and reformation because you know it was all good and well rebuilding and restoring and renewing and rededicating the temple for the worship of God but you know it was completely pointless and futile unless the worshipers of God repented of their sin and reformed their ways and you know the same is true of us as a congregation because you know it's all good and well refurbishing and repainting and replacing and renewing the sanctuary in the church but unless we're repenting of our sin and reforming our ways it's all meaningless unless we're committed in our witness committed to the worship of God as a congregation it's all futile unless we're warm and welcoming to those in our congregation and our community it's all pointless we're wasting our time you know my Christian friend as a return remnant living and looking beyond lockdown as God's covenant people we need to live as cleansed and confessing

[ 23 : 53 ] Christians and we need to do it by demonstrating our commitment to Christ as God's covenant people we need to live as cleansed and confessing Christians by demonstrating our commitment to Christ and you know that's what Zechariah's visions are exhorting and encouraging us to do because you know we're so like this return remnant who were living and looking beyond lockdown because we're God's covenant people we're a covenant community we're in a covenant relationship with the Lord the Lord is the one who keeps covenant therefore there needs to be commitment to the covenant there need to needs to be commitment to the covenant because there are conditions of the covenant and the conditions of the covenant are with obedience brings blessing but with disobedience comes cursing with obedience brings blessing but with disobedience comes cursing you know in his book it's a great book to read it's called Christ of the Covenant and it goes through all the covenants in the Bible in in his book old old Palmer Robertson he he defines a covenant by saying a covenant is a bond in blood sovereignly administered a covenant is a bond in blood sovereignly administered so when God enters into a covenant relationship with us he sovereignly institutes a life and death bond between us therefore there needs to be commitment to the covenant because there are conditions of the covenant with obedience brings blessing but with disobedience comes cursing and this is important for us to understand and to remember because the reason the Israelites ended up living in lockdown in Babylon was because of their disobedience to their covenant God they were in a covenant relationship with the Lord in effect it was a marriage it was a marriage bond it was a marriage relationship that's what a covenant is that's why the New Testament emphasizes that the church is the bride of Christ and Jesus is the bridegroom because it's all covenantal language it's all about a covenant relationship with the Lord it's a marriage relationship and a marriage as you know my friend it requires commitment a marriage relationship requires commitment but before living in lockdown in Babylon before the

Israelites were taken into exile in Babylon they lacked commitment to the word of God and the worship of God and in their disobedience to their covenantal relationship their marriage relationship with the Lord they were unfaithful they committed adultery the Lord said they prostituted themselves to idols and with disobedience came cursing and the curse of God's covenant people was to be driven out and exiled into Babylon the curse was to be shut out from the temple separated from the land of Israel and scattered throughout the empire to Babylon and you know that's why Zechariah sees a wicked woman sitting in a wicker basket she's a wicked woman sitting in a wicker basket and she's there because it's all an image and illustration of the defiance and disobedience of the covenant community they were the wicked woman Israel was the wicked woman they were the unfaithful wife they were the prostitute who had gone after idols they were the ones who broke the covenant relationship with the Lord and due to their lack of commitment to the word of God and the worship of God they became caged and confined and closed in in lockdown and that's what this this image is the image of the of the wicked woman in the wicker basket is them in lockdown and you know what's fascinating is that the word used in this vision for a basket is an ifa and an ifa was used to measure volume a cubit as we said it was used to measure area or length but an ifa was used to measure volume and an ifa basket it was like a round wicker basket used to measure or carry grain but the thing is it wasn't very big because it only held about five gallons or 22 liters and yet this wicked woman squashed and squeezed into this wicker basket with a lead lid put on top of her to cage her and confine her and close her her into lockdown it was all an image and illustration of what the Israelites had already been through where the their lack of commitment had left them living and living in lockdown but now is this return remnant now that they've returned they've returned to rebuild and restore and renew and rededicate the temple for the worship of God but as we said it was completely pointless unless the worshipers of God repented of their sin and reformed their ways because if they were going to be restoration and renewal of the worship of God then they're also needed to be repentance and reformation of the worshipers of God but the warning that the Lord was giving to his people in this seventh vision was that if there is no repentance and if there is no reformation then the remnant will return to Babylon if there is no repentance and no reformation if they don't change their ways and show commitment to the Lord then the remnant will return to Babylon and that's what the second part of this seventh vision was all about we read in verse 9 then I lifted my eyes and saw and behold two women coming forward the wind was in their wings they had wings like the wings of a stork and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven then I said to the angel who talked with me where are they taking the basket he said to me to the land of Shinar to build a house for

it and when this is prepared they will set the basket down there on its base so in his seventh vision Zechariah sees another UFO he sees two women with the wings of a stork carrying a basket now we've all heard people saying to young children that it's the stork who's responsible for bringing babies in a basket to new parents we've all heard that one before but these women in Zechariah's vision with wings of a stork it was nothing to do with babies but it was something to do with migration because storks with their long legs and large beaks and great giant wingspan when they migrated every year the land of Israel was in their flight path they always flew over the land of Israel so the land of Israel was in their flight path but so was Babylon and that's the warning which has been given here that the wicked woman squashed and squeezed into the wicker basket with this lead lid caging her and confining her and closing her in the warning that's been given is that she will be lifted back to lockdown in the land of Shinar she will be lifted back to lockdown in the land of Shinar and this is important because Babylon was in the land of Shinar Shinar was an old name was used back in the time of Abraham to describe Babylon or out of the qualities and you know that's the warning that's just been given here this return remnant who are now living in the land of Israel looking beyond lockdown and the Lord the one who keeps coming and they're covenant king he's warning them that if there's only going to be renewal and restoration of the worship of God but no repentance and reformation of the worship of the worshipers of God then a lack of commitment is going to send you back to Babylon a lack of commitment is going to leave you living in Babylon again and you know my friend it's a warning to us as God's covenant community because if there's only going to be restoration and renewal of the worship of God if we're just going to open church again and carry on the way we were before lockdown ever happened if nothing's going to be different no change is going to take place in our lives if there's going to be no repentance or reformation from the worshipers of God from us then our lack of commitment it's just going to leave us living in lockdown again my friend there needs to be not only a restoration and renewal of the

worship of God there also needs to be repentance and reformation for the worshipers of God and you know my friend our response to to the cleansing of our promised priest and our responsibility towards our promised priest Jesus Christ our responsibility is commitment to him 100 commitment to him and cleansing our cleansing is conveyed to others by our commitment if people want to know that you're a committed Christian my friend if people want to know that you are a cleansed Christian then you will convey that to them by your commitment to the Lord therefore our covenant relationship it comes with a covenant responsibility covenant responsibility with obedience brings blessing with disobedience comes car she and our covenant responsibility first and foremost is to love the Lord he is our covenant king he is the Lord Jesus Christ we're to love him love the Lord your God with all your heart mind

soul and strength and your neighbor as yourself but as you know my friend love isn't just an emotion love is engaging love equips love encourages love enables us to live committed to Christ the Lord's love for us and cleansing us and our love for the Lord you know it should confront us and challenge us about our commitment where is our commitment to the work the witness and the worship of God where is our commitment because there's one thing that should always be in our Christian character conduct and conversation and that's consistency my friend we need to have a consistent Christian character conduct and converse conversation because you know hypocrisy or inconsistency in our work our witness and our worship they don't bring glory to God and you know Zechariah's sixth and seventh visions they're reminding us about the importance of cleansing but also the importance of commitment commitment to the Lord because as God's covenant people we are part of a covenant community and we have a covenant responsibility to love look and lean upon the Lord we're not to get caught up in our worldly passions and worldly pursuits no we're to live and look beyond lockdown and we're to do it as dedicated disciples with a consistent Christian character conduct and conversation you know my friend my friend there not only needs to be a restoration and renewal of the worship of God there needs to be repentance and reformation from the worshipers of God we need cleansing and we need commitment and commitment to the Lord the Lord's house the Lord's day the Lord's cause the Lord's people we need repentance and reformation that Zechariah's message won us this evening let's convey our commitment to the Lord by seeking to live out his message in this new week that we go into may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray our heavenly Father we give thanks to thee for the encouragements but also the warnings in thy word we give thanks for the reminder that we are those who have been cleansed cleansed from sin and uncleanness cleansed from every sin transgression and inequity but with that cleansing comes responsibility it comes commitment help us to be committed committed to thy cause committed to our Christ committed Lord to the kingdom that we are serving in that we would not step back but step up step forward and step out because as thy word reminds us if we want to walk on water we need to get out of the boat all our bless us we pray guide us we ask help us to stand up for Jesus in our day and generation help us to convey the cleansing that we have received by our commitment to the Lord do us good we pray go before us for Jesus's sake amen

we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening by considering the words of Psalm 51 Psalm 51 it's in the sing Psalms version we're singing from verse 7 down to the verse marked 15 Psalm 51 as you know it's a Psalm about cleansing and it's a Psalm about commitment when David received cleansing he also was encouraged to be someone who's committed and it's a reminder to us that we need cleansing but we also need commitment cleanse with his purify me I'll be whiter than the snow let the bones you crush be joyful may I joy and gladness know from my failure hide your face blot out all my wickedness and we'll sing down to the verse marked 15 to God's praise cleanse with his purify me I'll be whiter than the snow cleanse with his purify me I'll be whiter than the snow cleanse with his purify me I'll be whiter than the snow let the bones you crush be joyful may I joy and gladness know from my failure hide your face blot out all my wickedness [ 40 : 28 ] Lord, we thank You for doing me and the strength of my dream to not take Your Spirit from me as we got away from You Give me market joy and light, keep my willing spirit light Then I'll teach Your ways to sinners, rebels will turn back to You

Bring me from what built my Savior, Lord most merciful and true Then I'll praise Your righteousness, teach my lips Your name to bless