

RETURN

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH



saltchurch.

ZECHARIAH SERIES BREAKUP

| DATE | BIBLE | DATE | BIBLE |
|-----------|---------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| 12-16 Oct | Zech 1:7-2:13 | 9-13 Nov | Zech 7-8 |
| 19-23 Oct | Choose your own | 16-20 Nov | Zech 9 |
| 24-25 Oct | Salt Away | 23-27 Nov | Zech 10-11 |
| 26-30 Oct | Zech 3-4 | 30 Nov - 4 Dec | Zech 12-14 |
| 2-6 Nov | Zech 5-6 | 7-11 Dec | Finishing up |

SOMETHING NEW

We're back to our regular pattern this series, of discussing part of the bible before it's preached on, so we don't just 'let the expert' tell us what to believe but wrestle with God's word for ourselves. There's something new this series though: short videos to watch with your group. Here's why...

Zechariah has broadly 2 genres in it. The first half (chapters 1-6) is made of 'apocalyptic' literature, which is a way of writing we're unfamiliar with as 21st Century people, but was common enough in bible times. To generalise, apocalyptic is unique for using symbols and signs to communicate God's truths. To help you understand and unpack those symbols and signs, each week there'll be a video explaining what they mean.

For the second half (chapters 7-14) the genre is narrative and prophecy. We're more familiar with this genre. But even so, we're doing big sections so we can grapple with the whole book of Zechariah this series. So there'll be videos for that half of the book too, to overview the section.

To prep as a Leader: read the bible passage & these notes, watch the video, & work out which questions would be best for your group.

Then each week in your Small Group time: read the bible passage, watch the video together, ask the questions and chat away.

WHAT'S ZECHARIAH ABOUT?

The nation of Israel has returned from being exiled in Babylon, sent back by the Persian King Darius. But...

In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah, the son of Iddo: "The LORD was very angry with your ancestors. Therefore tell the people:

This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Return to me,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'and I will return to you,' says the LORD Almighty. (1:1-3)

Though they've physically returned from exile, they haven't yet returned to God in their hearts and the way they treat God and each other. So they're experiencing curses from God not blessings. Especially important is the way they treat God's house / temple, as it shows if they want God with them. Things aren't going well, but when they hear Zechariah...

Then they repented and said, 'The LORD Almighty has done to us what our ways and practices deserve, just as he determined to do.' (1:6)

Here's a rare moment when God's people actually listen to God's prophet! And since they've returned to God, he promises to return to them...

In his attitude to them: 'I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and there my house will be rebuilt. (1:16)

In his presence with them: "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City, and the mountain of the Lord Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain." (8:3)

The place where both things come (God with his people in mercy) is the temple / the house of God. So the stage is set for Zechariah: we're waiting for God to return to his people in mercy since they've returned to him. God promises to do that and makes promises in 2 different genres: apocalyptic visions (1-6) and prophecies (7-14). As a quick overview...

The point of the 8 visions is that God is returning to Israel all the things that were lost in the exile. So the temple will be rebuilt, Jerusalem will be repopulated, the Priesthood will be purified and recommissioned, the Davidic line will be reinstated, sin will be removed from the people and land. And most wonderful of all: God will return to dwell in his temple with his people.

These promises are huge! Almost to the point of being unbelievable, since they don't match the historical reality of what Israel had after the exile. So what's going on? That's where the oracles come in. 2 years after the visions Zechariah is given oracles / prophecies from God.

The point of the oracles is that Israel doesn't yet have these things because of the people's sin (chap 7-8) and because of bad leadership (chap 10-11). Yet God will still bring the promises of the visions, but in an unexpected way. The future will get worse before it gets better - in fact it's in the midst of conflict, on the brink of defeat and facing near death, that's when God will restore his people (chap 12-14). And he'll do it through a humbled and rejected King (chap 9).

400 years of silence follow, when God doesn't again speak to a prophet. Then Jesus arrives with this news...

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent (i.e. return) and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15)

The humbled and rejected King is here. Things get worse for Jesus and his followers before they get better. Jesus is killed, is raised, and God restores to his people all he promised. And most wonderful of all, God returns to dwell in mercy with his people, all people who bend the knee to Jesus.

ZECH 1:7-2:13 • 12-16 OCT

READ: Read Zechariah 1:7-2:13

VIDEO: Watch the [overview video](#) and then the [video for this week](#)

QUESTIONS:

Questions for Zechariah 1:7-21 *(for extra info go to Jer 25:11-12)*

- What would the 'kind and comforting words' (v14-17) of these visions have meant for Ancient Israel?
- If you were one of the nations at the time reading this, how do you think you'd react?
- How do you think these visions relate to us, on the other side of the cross? How do these visions change the way you see our world? How do they comfort you?

Like God's people then, we live in waiting for God to return and restore us. We know God is for us because of sending his Son to take our place, and we know judgement is coming for those who are enemies of the gospel and of God.

- Do you long for the coming Judgement Day? Why, why not?

Questions for Zechariah 2:1-13

- If you were a Babylonian reading this, how do you think you'd react? What do you think God would want you to do?
- What do you think it meant for the people of Zechariah's time to 'be still before the Lord' (v13)? What do you think it means for us now?

PRAY TO END: Praise God for His promise to right all wrongs one Day soon. Pray for friends who are 'at rest and peace, that they might turn to God and find mercy. Pray we would gladly submit to God's plans and purposes rather than our own. Thank God for building his Church – and for calling people from all nations back to Him through Jesus' gospel.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN • 19-23 OCT

DIRECTION: This Sunday we'll be at Salt Away (not too late to register: www.saltchurch.info/away) and won't meet at 275 Keira St for our usual 10am or 5pm gatherings. So take a break from Zechariah and choose your own adventure! If you're not sure what to look at, there's questions related to Salt Away's topic: why & how Christian men & women serve together.

WHY 'CHOOSE YOUR OWN' WEEKS:

One downside of the way we unpack books at Salt is we move quick! You might have started a great chat in your group 1 week, but by the next week we've moved on. This week is a chance to choose your own adventure – continue 1 of those chats or look at another topic / question / part of the bible your group wants to. Choose your own weeks can be great for your group digging into something that's puzzling, troubling or exciting them.

SALT AWAY - BIBLE DISCUSSION:

Here's questions you can use to chat about the Salt Away topic

- Has your experience of serving in ministry at Salt Church been generally positive or generally negative?
- Has your experience of working with or under the leadership of people of the opposite sex at Salt Church been generally positive or negative?

How men and women serve together is a big and sensitive topic! We bring different ideas & our own experiences to it. At Salt Away we're going to see what God says about it all. To whet our appetites...

Read Genesis 1:26 to Genesis 3:24 (*it's a big slab, but it's awesome, & the most important starting place for this topic*)

- What do you notice about the a) similarities and b) differences between the man & the woman?
- What strikes you about the way God relates with men & women here?
- What questions do you have from this passage or on this topic?

Pray: for Salt Away, for God to teach us, for Michael's prep, for unity.

DO YOUR OWN BIBLE DISCUSSION:

Alternatively, if you want to continue a previous discussion or dig into another topic / question / part of the bible here's how you could do that...

Getting Ideas:

A week before this, let your group know there's a 'choose your own' week coming up. Collect ideas, like a topic / question / part of the bible they want to explore. Vote to find the most popular 1 & get prepping.

Getting Prepped:

Brainstorm where in the bible the topic / question comes up. Or for a part of the bible, read it a bunch of times to work out what it means. Ask your coach & other leaders if they know good places / what the passage means.

If you feel more confident you can read up on the topic in a systematic theology / commentary (there's a bunch upstairs at 275 Keira St to borrow). If you're keen to learn more about the skill of creating studies, check out the book *Writing a Small Group Study* by Richard Sweatman.

Packaging a Discussion:

1. Use the COMA method: we use it in these notes; it stands for: Context-Observation-Meaning-Application.
2. Use the 'Swedish Method', where you read the passage together & ask:
 - a. What stands out to you?
 - b. What's a question you have?
 - c. What do you think the big point is?
 - d. What's one thing you want to do in response?
3. Or just read the passage & ask 'what do you reckon?' & see where your discussion takes you.

NEED HELP?

You don't have to have all the answers or be the expert to be a Small Group Leader, so don't stress out for this week. Just get people into God's word & let Him teach & transform us by His Spirit. Your Small Group Coach is always available & ready to give you help too.

ZECH 3-4 • 26-30 OCT

READ: Read Zechariah Chapter 3-4

VIDEO: Watch the [video for this week here](#)

QUESTIONS:

Questions for Zechariah Chapter 3

- How serious do you think Joshua's problem is? Why do you think God fixes his problem? Why does God do it the way he does it here?
- How does this vision help us understand what Jesus has done for us?
- How can this vision help you:
 - When Satan accuses you / tempts you to despair? (*Rev 12:7-9*)
 - When God appears not to hear your prayers? (*Heb 4:14-16*)

Questions for Zechariah Chapter 4

- How do you think Zerubbabel should respond to God's word to him? What should he trust in?
- Can you think of places in the NT that talk about 'the temple'? What do you think changes about the temple between the OT and NT?

The main point is the same between OT and NT – that the temple is where God lives with his people. What's changed though is that the physical temple is destroyed & replaced by Jesus who is the true temple (John 2:19-21, 1 Pet 2:4-6, Rev 21:22). By being united to Jesus through the Holy Spirit we become the temple too – the place God lives is in and with Christians! (Eph 2:19-22, 1 Cor 6:19-20, 1 Pet 2:4-5).

- How might God's words to Zerubbabel be an encouragement to us as we seek to "build God's temple", by calling people to trust Jesus and become a place where God's Spirit lives?

PRAY TO END: Thank God for sending Jesus who, through his death on the cross, removed 'the sin of this land in a single day'. Pray for confidence to approach God through our great High Priest. Also thank God for building His Church on His Son. Pray we won't trust in our own 'might or power' to see people saved but in the power of God's Spirit and the gospel message.

ZECH 5-6 • 2-6 NOV

READ: Read Zechariah 5:1-6:15

VIDEO: Watch the [video for this week here](#)

QUESTIONS:

Questions for Zechariah 5:1-6:8

- What do these visions show us about God's view of sin?
- Are you as committed to removing sin in your life as God is to remove it from his people in this passage? – Obviously not! But why not? What do we fail to see that this part of the bible can correct?
- *How* do you think God removes sin from Christians now?

Questions for Zechariah 6:9-15

- Why do you think God gave this sign to Joshua and to Israel?
- What does it show about the promises God has made so far in Zechariah? What does it point forward to?

God will make a temple through Zerubbabel and restore the priesthood through Joshua. But he has bigger things in store: Jesus the Priest-King who will rule on a better eternal throne and be the permanent superior temple.

PRAY TO END: Thank God for his promise to finally deal with wickedness, and sin, and for the way he has already forgiven you through the perfect Branch / Priest-King. Pray God would help you put to death the ongoing sin in your life and strengthen you to live a new life of repentance and faith.

ZECH 7-8 • 9-13 NOV

READ: Read Zechariah Chapter 7-8

VIDEO: Watch the [video for this week here](#)

QUESTIONS:

- Are there times when you 'tick the box' in your Christian life, without really doing it for God? Why are we tempted to be religious hypocrites?
- What kinds of things does God promise to give to Israel? Why do you think God treats them that way?
- What things has God given (or promised to give) Christians? Why do you think God treats us that way?
- 8:20-23 anticipates people from across the globe coming to Jerusalem to find out about God and be saved by him. Do you think this is the same way we should do mission now? Why, why not? (*Matt 28:18-20*)
- How can you help people see the attractiveness of having 'God with you', i.e. being a Christian?

PRAY TO END: Thank God for the amazing blessings we have because of his grace and mercy. Pray we might be willing to go to make disciples, and that God might work through our witness to draw others to know Him. Pray for specific friends and family who don't yet know him.

ZECH 9 • 16-20 NOV

READ: Read Zechariah Chapter 9

VIDEO: Watch the [video for this week here](#)

QUESTIONS:

- Who is included in the saved people of God? (*v7, v10-12*)
- What will these people experience on the day of salvation? (*v9, v15-17*)
- What reason does this passage give for why God will do this? (*v11*)
- What strikes you about the description of the King? How do we see this happen in Jesus' life, death and resurrection? (*Luke 18:31-33, 19:28-40*)
- Who does the fighting to overcome and rescue in this chapter? (*v1, v8, v10, v13-16*)
- How does this help us better grasp what Jesus achieved on the cross?

PRAY TO END: Praise God for the salvation that Jesus has brought. Pray that all people will honour this humble suffering King as the great King.

ZECH 10-11 • 23-27 NOV

READ: Read Zechariah 10:1-11:14

VIDEO: Watch the [video for this week here](#)

QUESTIONS:

Questions for Zechariah 10:1-11:3

- Who is God angry with in particular in this section? Why is he angry?
- What's the difference between how these leaders shepherd the flock and how God will shepherd his flock?
- What will God do to the bad shepherds? (10:3, 11:1-3; see also *Isa 2:12-18* & *Jer 25:36-38* which make sense of 11:1-3)
- Jesus says lots about good and false shepherds. What passages in the NT can you think of? (*Matt 9:35-38, John 10:1-18, 1 Pet 2:24-25, 5:1-4*)

Questions for Zechariah 11:4-14

- What is the point of this 'sign-act' (i.e. of Zechariah being a shepherd)?
- Is 11:4-14 this something that *will* happen in the future, or something that *has* happened in the past? How can you tell?
- Do you have times when you undervalue your relationship with God? How does this passage encourage you not to do that?

PRAY TO END: Praise God for our Good Shepherd Jesus, who laid his life down for the sheep and gathered us to him. Pray for *all our Leaders* at Salt Church (all leaders – not only the pastors!) that they'll imitate the Good Shepherd in speaking his words and caring for the sheep. Pray for *all of us* at Salt Church that we'll humbly hear and obey our chief shepherd Jesus.

ZECH 12-14 • 30 NOV-4 DEC

READ: Read Zechariah Chapters 12-14

VIDEO: Watch the [video for this week here](#)

QUESTIONS:

- How do these chapters make you react...
 - To the futility of opposing God? (*see Acts 4:23-30*)
 - To your own sin, especially idolatry?
 - To Jesus death in our place – when he was 'pierced' (12:10) and 'struck' (13:7)?
For Jesus pierced see Rev 1:7. For being struck see Mark 14:27-28.
 - To the suffering you experience as a Christian?
 - To the ultimate justice of God punishing those who reject him?
 - To our confidence as Christians that the future is certain?

To finish search YouTube for the song [There is a Fountain](#) & watch the version by *Selah* with lyrics. Give thanks for the 1 who was pierced for us!

PRAY TO END: Pray for strength to endure until Jesus returns. Pray for opportunities to take the news of Jesus' victory to the nations – so they might worship the King, rather than endure his punishment.

FINISHING UP • 7-11 DEC

DIRECTION: Have a Christmas party with your group to end the year! The reason we have Small Groups is so we can help each other know God better and learn to love each other like He's loved us. As you finish up for the year – or maybe even finish as a group – take the chance to reflect on how God's grown you in your relationship with Him & each other.

Fyi groups normally finish up in early Dec rather than later, because:

1. It's way better for the vibe of your group to finish well, with people coming & wanting more, rather than limping to the end of the year with people slowly dropping off. That's painful for everyone!
2. December's a full time for lots of people with shopping, holidays, Christmas parties. So beat the rush & get in early!

If your group's finishing up altogether, or if people might change groups next year, think through ending well. Chat with your Coach & check out 'It's a Living Thing' in chap 5 of [Getting Started as a Small Group Leader](#) for tips.

REFLECT: Think back to when you first joined this group. How have you seen your relationship *with God* grow this year?

- How have you seen your relationship *with other people here* grow?
- How have you seen *someone else in our group* grow as a Christian?

PLAN: As we finish up meeting for the year, what can you do:

- *To keep growing* as a Christian over summer and into next year?
- *To help others in this group keep growing* as Christians over summer?

PRAY: Spend time thanking God for how He's grown us to know Him better and taught us to love each other like He loves us this year.

Ask for God's help to grow over summer and next year, so that we'd all know, love & trust Him more at the end of next year than we did this year.

