

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

## ***Haggai and Zechariah***

Haggai speaks about rebuilding the temple and being restored to the glory of God. Zechariah sounds hope of restoration to God as he expresses the longing of the people of God for the glory of God. Both of these books leave us in the Old Testament longing for Christ. He alone is the true temple, where we encounter the glory of God. And He alone can reconcile and restore us to the presence of God. Zechariah, in particular, looks forward to the victory that the Lord will bring, and indeed, Jesus alone will inaugurate that victory.

We will begin by tracing the historical setting in 2 Chronicles and Ezra that prepares the way for the prophecies in Haggai and Zechariah.

## ***Study the Text . . .***

**2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-11, Isaiah 44:24-45:13: God sovereignly uses rulers to fulfill His purposes and declare His glory.**

- Why does Cyrus allow the Judeans to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple?
- How did Cyrus and his kingdom support the Judeans as they returned to Jerusalem?
- What do we learn about God, when we read that He has "anointed" Cyrus and that Cyrus is His "shepherd" who shall fulfill all His purposes?

**Ezra 3-4: God's people will encounter opposition if they are faithfully obeying and worshipping the LORD.**

- What part of the temple did the people rebuild?
- What rulers laid the foundation of the temple (v. 3:8)?
- What did the people do when the foundation was laid?
- How were the people opposed in their rebuilding efforts?
- What led to the people ceasing work on the temple?

**Ezra 5:1-5, Haggai 1: When God's people faithfully obey God's commands, nothing can hinder their work or their success.**

- Why did the people begin to rebuild the temple?
- In what kind of houses did the people live (Haggai v. 1:4)?
- What two men led the people as they begin to rebuild the temple?

**Haggai 2:1-9: God's glory accompanies His presence as He draws all nations to worship Him.**

This declaration from God comes a little over a month after the first command in Haggai 1.

- Why does God tell the people to fear not (v. 5)?

- Do you know why God says, “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former”?

**Zechariah 1:1-6: Repentance is necessary for people who desire to obey and worship God.**

This word from God comes only a few weeks after the command in Haggai 2.

- What does it mean “to return to the Lord” (v. 3)?

The people were already at work rebuilding the temple, but this obedience was not enough to meet their basic need, reconciliation with God. The people needed to humble themselves and repent of their sins. The people did repent, and after they repent God begins to speak to Zechariah in a series of visions that begin to explain some of the glorious plans of God.

***Group Discussion . . .***

The prophecies in Haggai and Zechariah are closely tied to several other Old Testament books that we are reading. Daniel, in Daniel 9 realized that the prophecy of Jeremiah had past, and he turns to God with prayer and fasting, begging God to turn His face back to His city and His people. King Cyrus issues a decree granting the Judeans permission to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. We do not know what role Daniel played in this decree, but he most likely made a significant contribution. The people then begin to return to Jerusalem in waves. Ezra writes of how they rebuild the altar and begin to offer burnt offerings before the LORD. Then, they begin taking an offering for the rebuilding of the temple. In their second year back in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel and Joshua oversee the laying of the foundation of the temple, and the people worship God with great shouts of joy. Their adversaries hear this joyful celebration, and many rise up to oppose the work. This opposition eventually leads to the cessation of the work until the second year of Darius. During that year, Haggai and Zechariah receive a Word from the LORD to start rebuilding the temple. The people are living comfortable lives in nice houses, but God’s house sat unfinished. Through Haggai, God promises that His Spirit will be with them. Then Zechariah receives a Word to call the people to repent. It is not enough for them to obey God. They must humble themselves, turn from their sins, and turn to God and worship Him alone.

This is an amazing story of how God uses ordinary, poor people and pagan kings to bring glory to His name.

- Discuss how God shows and pours out His grace in this story among a people who were in exile?
- Share examples of how God has been gracious to your family during the last year? How has God used your family to declare His glory to another family or individuals in the last year?
- These people were faithfully rebuilding the temple under the leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel; yet, God calls them to repent and return to Him. Is it possible that any of us or all of us are trying to faithfully serve God and obey, but we have not repented of

our sins and turned to God to worship Him alone and serve Him alone? Do we need to repent of any sins? Are we worshipping anything or anyone other than Christ?

### ***Study the Text . . .***

It is not possible to study all of Zechariah, so we are going to look at one remarkable vision.

#### **Zechariah 4: God calls His people to be a light to the world.**

Read the chapter and try to visualize the vision Zechariah is describing.

The angel returns to Zechariah and arouses him from the stupor that he is in from the last vision. The angel asks him, “What do you see?” This is what Zechariah describes. There is a golden lampstand with seven oil lamps on it. Above the lampstand is a bowl that is connected to each lamp by seven pipes for a total of 49 nine pipes coming out of the bowl and going to the lamps. There are two olive trees on each side of the lampstand and the branches of these olive trees reach over the bowl. There are two branches that connect the olive trees to the bowl. The purpose of the olive trees is to provide an automatic and spontaneous supply of golden oil to the basin, which continually fills the lamps with oil without the help of the priests.

There was a lampstand in the tabernacle and in the temple, but this one is different. The tabernacle contained one seven branch lampstand, but it did not have an oil bowl above it. The lampstand did not have seven pipes coming from each lamp, and there were not two olive trees in the tabernacle. The priests maintained the tabernacle lampstand. The people gave the priests oil, and in the morning and at night the priests were to fill the lamps with oil to keep the lampstand lighted.

What is the significance of the lampstand? It signified Israel’s divine calling to be a witness of God’s salvation to the pagan nations around her. For example, Genesis 12:2, God tells Abram, “I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing.” In Ezekiel 5:5, we see that God intentionally put Jerusalem in the center of all the nations because Israel was to be a witness of God’s glory. The lampstand symbolized what kind of nation Israel was supposed to be, but Israel failed. Israel killed the prophets, disobeyed God’s word and lapsed into idolatry with the nations to whom she was supposed to witness. So God destroys the temple and sends his people into exile, but he does not end there. In Isaiah 60:1-3 God tells his people who are in exile, “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.” God’s design is that once again Israel will be a light to the nations.

This prophecy speaks of that day. The two olive branches refer to Joshua, the priest, and Zerubbabel, the prince who is fulfilling the role of king at that time in Judah. It is through these two leaders that the oil is being supplied for the nation to be a light to the world. In the Bible, oil almost always refers to the Holy Spirit. It is through Joshua and Zerubbabel

that the Holy Spirit is going to make Judah a light and rebuild the temple. All the promises that are made to Zerubbabel in verses 6-10 are only going to be possible because the Holy Spirit is working through Joshua and Zerubbabel to accomplish God's plan just like the Holy Spirit worked through Cyrus to issue the decree and begin Judah's return from exile.

- Look at Zechariah 4:6. This is the verse that we all know. What is God saying will be done "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit"?
- Look at Zechariah 4:9-10. Why does God promise that Zerubbabel's hands shall complete the temple?

Unfortunately, we cannot look at all the details of chapter 4, but it is important to see the connection to Jesus. In Zechariah 4:12, Zechariah asks what the two olive trees represent. For Zechariah's time period, they represented Zerubbabel, the prince of Judah, and Joshua, the priest. They were filling the important roles of king and priest. In the New Testament, we know that Jesus is king, priest and prophet. This is how we explain the prophecy as it relates to the church. Christ is the two olive trees, and Christ is constantly filling the basin with oil and the basin is constantly filling each lamp of the lampstand with a plentiful supply of oil. The oil refers to the Holy Spirit. Christ is constantly pouring out the Holy Spirit into his church (Revelation 1:12-20) into the individual lamps, believers who are connected to the church. This is a beautiful picture of how the church is a light to the world not by our own might or our own strength but by the power of the Holy Spirit. As Israel and Jerusalem were to be a light to the world, today the church is to be a light to the world through the power of the Holy Spirit.

### ***Group Discussion . . .***

God was declaring His glory and proclaiming His name during the time of Zechariah and Haggai not by the peoples own might or power, but by the power of His Spirit. God used pagan kings and opposition to His name and His temple to trumpet His name and bring Him glory and honor. God still works powerfully today using any means He desires to turn people to worship Him. We know that God desires for His people to proclaim His gospel. God makes His church a beacon of light in a very dark world. Zechariah 4 gives us a picture of Christ pouring a spontaneous and unending supply of His Spirit into His church.

- Do we believe that our church is receiving an unending supply of the Holy Spirit?
- Do we believe that each member of this church is a lamp that is shining brightly for Christ because that member is connected to the body of Christ and receiving the power of the Holy Spirit?
- Do we live and proclaim the gospel without fear because we know that the power of the Spirit fills us?
- What (maybe) is keeping our church from receiving an overflowing supply of the Holy Spirit? What was necessary before God delivered this vision to Zechariah? See Zechariah 1:3, 6.
- Do we realize how powerfully God can use us if we are a repentant church dependent of the Spirit of God?

## Small Group Guide – Week 38

### Whom Yahweh Remembers

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*September 20 - 26, 2010*

*Haggai/Zechariah*

---

- Do we want to be a Holy Spirit filled church that is a light to the world?

**Ezra 6** – King Darius issues a decree, and the people begin work on the temple again. The temple is completed and the people of God worship Him and praise His holy name. God gave them a command to rebuild the temple. God has given us a command as well. Are we pursuing it? Are we obeying God's word? Do we truly desire for all nations to look to us and see Christ and worship Christ because of how He is making His name known through our lives?