

# Harvest

Evangelical Free Church

SERIES: Confidence in a Broken World • Lesson 2  
For Adult Bible Fellowships and Small Groups March 7-13, 2010

Join us in being on mission with God!

**OUR VISION**

To continually mature and grow as a united body of Jesus-imitators who live out God's greatest commandment to "Love" by exalting God and serving one another, and His greatest commission to "Go" by reaching into and shaping our local, regional, and global communities.

## "God's New Normal"

*Zechariah 1:7-21*

### Getting Started

*After an introductory time, discuss the following questions in your group or class.*

Bruce gets up at 4:30 a.m. He works feverishly to keep his area immaculate. He wolfs down food in record time. When asked questions, he responds loudly and with confidence and respect. He thinks in terms of what is expected of him rather than in terms of what he wants or desires. Such is life for Bruce in basic training. So much that was strange to him as a civilian is now normal and expected.

Shelly sleeps on the couch for the 4th night in a row. She has become accustomed to the cold floors and the movements in the room at night that continually wake her up. She has learned a whole new vocabulary of medical terms as a mother of a child fighting the N1H1 in a hospital room. What was strange and different has become the new normal.

After you're in a new environment for a while, what may have seemed strange at once now seems normal. You adapt to the new environment because you must. And as you do, your definition of what is expected and how things should work begins to change. When you are in a different environment long enough, you may even change your idea of what *normal* looks like so that your perspective about life is permanently changed.

The Jews who had resettled in the land of Israel from the north accepted a very different definition of *normal* than those who had seen the glory days of David and Solomon.

Q: Name a skill or an achievement in your life that required some preparation before you could enjoy the fruit of your labor.

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### A Time of Uncertainty

There is a feeling in America today that our best days may be behind us. The financial debt that hangs over our nation, the threat of third-world countries acquiring a nuclear arsenal, and the specter of terrorist attacks create an atmosphere of unease in the minds of many. We wonder if the lifestyle we enjoy will be sustainable for our children or grandchildren. What does the world have for us in the midst of all the uncertainties before us?

The book of Zechariah was written in a time much like our own. The nation of Israel had been conquered, and its leaders taken into exile. A remnant has returned to the land, but the situation is bleak. Everything is in ruins. They are surrounded by powerful hostile enemies. The political situation makes rebuilding the temple and the culture problematic. The prospect of regaining some of the glory of the past seems almost impossible.

God sends Zechariah to his people to remind them that God is not done with them yet. He still has more he wants them to experience if they are willing to trust him.

Part of the message of Zechariah is about the immediate future. Part of it speaks about the first coming of Jesus. Other parts of the prophecy relate to Christ's second coming. All of this combines to offer courage and hope to God's people. It's an invitation for us to trust him, despite our



## Zechariah 1:7-21

<sup>7</sup> On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo. <sup>8</sup> During the night I had a vision-- and there before me was a man riding a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him were red, brown and white horses. <sup>9</sup> I asked, "What are these, my lord?" The angel who was talking with me answered, "I will show you what they are." <sup>10</sup> Then the man standing among the myrtle trees explained, "They are the ones the LORD has sent to go throughout the earth." <sup>11</sup> And they reported to the angel of the LORD, who was standing among the myrtle trees, "We have gone throughout the earth and found the whole world at rest and in peace." <sup>12</sup> Then the angel of the LORD said, "LORD Almighty, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, which you have been angry with these seventy years?" <sup>13</sup> So the LORD spoke kind and comforting words to the angel who talked with me. <sup>14</sup> Then the angel who was speaking to me said, "Proclaim this word: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I am very jealous for Jerusalem and Zion, <sup>15</sup> but I am very angry with the nations that feel secure. I was only a little angry, but they added to the calamity.' <sup>16</sup> "Therefore, this is what the LORD says: 'I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and there my house will be rebuilt. And the measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem,' declares the LORD Almighty. <sup>17</sup> "Proclaim further: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'My towns will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem.'" <sup>18</sup> Then I looked up-- and there before me were four horns! <sup>19</sup> I asked the angel who was speaking to me, "What are these?" He answered me, "These are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem." <sup>20</sup> Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen. <sup>21</sup> I asked, "What are these coming to do?" He answered, "These are the horns that scattered Judah so that no one could raise his head, but the craftsmen have come to terrify them and throw down these horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter its people."

doubts and discouragements.

This prophet demonstrates how God brings confidence to us in our broken down world. He is not done with your life. He is not finished with what he plans to do in your church. He has more in store for those who will trust him and move forward!

Verse one dates the first prophecy of Zechariah to the year. The 8th month of Darius 2nd year is 520 B.C.

There are over 20 men in the Old Testament with the name of Zechariah. Iddo seems to be his grandfather's name. His grandfather returned from exile in 538 B.C. Some wonder if his father died as young man and he was raised by his grandfather, since he is linked to Iddo, not Berechiah, in Ezra 5:1.

1. If the prophet came back to Israel around 538 B.C. with his father and grandfather, how old do you think he might have been when he started his role as a prophet in 520 B.C.? How do you think growing up in the family of a well-known priest affected him personally?

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2. What do you think the impact was of growing up in a foreign company and then seeing the desolation of his homeland first-hand?

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3. In verse 2 Zechariah reminds his audience that God was "very angry" with their ancestors. From your understanding of God's actions in the Bible, what kind of consequences come to a group of people when God becomes angry with them? List some of the results you see in the Bible.

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4. God's wrath does not always result in fire and brimstone. List some of the consequences God mentions in Deuteronomy 18:20-24.

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Some people wonder if hurricane Katrina, the H1-N1 virus, or the earthquake in Haiti are signs of God's judgment on a population. Since we have no prophets giving us new revelation, it is unwise to claim such an absolute connection between these things and God. But it is possible to speak of the kinds of things God *has* done when people have forsaken his truth.

5. How might you answer the question, "Is XYZ God's judgment?" in light of his

## God's New Normal

dealings with Israel in the Old Testament?

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6. The first step for the people who are back from captivity and living in the ruins of their former glorious city is outlined in verse 3. What is the number 1 priority God puts on them?

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7. Some of them were probably action-oriented folks who wanted to move stone and rebuild walls and get the pattern of worship established as fast as possible. What are some of the external things *we* tend to focus on when we are eager to get something done for Jesus?

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8. What's the danger of doing lots of stuff other people see without working on issues of the heart?

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9. How do you see God's grace reflected in the command in Zechariah 1:3?

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10. In verse 4 God gives the people a warning. Who were they likely to mimic in following God? In what ways do you see yourself picking up patterns from your parents—even patterns that you promised yourself as a young adult you would do differently?

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11. Why is it hard for us to break free from the stuff that our parents and those before us model to us?

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Reaching Up and Reaching Out

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12. Most of their parents probably never declared, "Watch us defy God!" They probably disobeyed in more subtle ways. What are some of the small compromises parents can make that reflect an independence toward God and his ways?

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13. Why do you think God reminds Zechariah's generation that neither their parents nor the prophets live forever? See verse 5. What principle is he trying to get across to them?

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14. What do you think God means in verse 6 when he states that his words "overtake" the generation of Zechariah's forefathers?

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16. What are some of the principles of God's truth that have "caught up" with you? Describe an issue where you knew what God's approach was, but where you ignored it and relied on yourself instead, only to regret it later.

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17. Zechariah notes that when the people had been exiled, they came to their senses and repented. What does repentance look like in their confession at the end of verse 6?

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18. All of us experience grief, sorrow, and regret for some of the bad choices we've made and some of the rotten attitudes we can sometimes harbor. But that is not repentance. In your group, walk through a working definition of repentance and record it below.

Repentance is when a person \_\_\_\_\_

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