



LC STUDY GUIDE
“Broken”

The Passage: Zechariah 3:1-10
March 19 – March 30

How to use the LC Study Guide

Hello Leaders! Thank you for your ongoing commitment to pursue Christian community and the study of Scripture that leads to life transformation in Christ and strives to serve “the other.”

These studies have been designed with the following aspects in mind:

1. To facilitate a discussion on the passage of Scripture that was preached that particular Sunday using the Inductive Bible Study Method (not necessarily on the themes of that particular sermon). In summary, this method stresses “Observation” (what the reader can see from the text), “Interpretation” (what we can learn when we study the text with various tools, commentaries, and resources), and “Application” (how we can apply the Scripture to our lives).
2. Groups using this study range from the new leader to the highly experienced. Groups themselves have their own context. This study attempts to hit the middle. The stronger studies require about an hour or two of leader preparation to contextualize this resource to the needs and personalities of your group.
3. In addition to prep time, please spend time in prayer during preparation and before and after the study. It’s the power of the Holy Spirit that illuminates the Word of Scripture and we are humbled that He uses our combined efforts as part of this work. (For more tips on using this study, please see the endnotes.)

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership and all that you do for the cause of Christ. Please let us know if we can help you in any way.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tim, on behalf of the LC Team

Introduction

Here we are deep into Lent and nearing the end of our “Broken” series that looks at seven of the twelve minor prophets of the Old Testament. If you are feeling a bit overwhelmed by the heaviness of the series and these studies, then you have been here and are getting it. The prophets were sent by God to call out the sin and injustice of Israel, warning them of God’s judgment and inviting them to repentance until the Messiah appears on the scene. Today, we get a word of encouragement in the midst of despair in the book of Zechariah.

Context

The ministry and prophecy of Zechariah happened in what's called the "post-exilic" period, meaning the time that the captives of Israel returned from Babylon. In 539 BC, King Cyrus had signed an edict that released the Israelites and even sent them back with the gold and artifacts that were taken from Solomon's temple as a gift in their rebuilding of their new temple, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and their society.

Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai, who as an exiled elderly priest himself, had the critical role of calling Israel to rebuild the temple. This aspect of his prophetic ministry was only 4 months long and God raised up Zechariah to begin his ministry halfway through Haggai's.

As we learned from previous messages and studies, when the 50,000 Israelites returned from Babylon, they built the altar at the old Solomon's Temple site, laid the foundation for the smaller new temple, and became discouraged by the work and threatening neighbors. The governor of Jerusalem was Zerubbabel and the high priest was Joshua, who plays a key role in Zechariah.

They stopped rebuilding for 16 years, during which King Cyrus was killed in battle. After a series of political rebellions, Darius Hystaspes took the throne in 522 BC. He had a similar policy with Israel, affirmed the previous edict, and construction of the temple in Jerusalem resumed in 520 BC. That part of the project was completed in 516 BC, giving Israel a new and functioning temple for them to bring sacrifices to, pray, learn, and worship. Zechariah is the young prophet and priest who witnessed these events and ministered throughout this time.

In today's study, we want to look at Zechariah's fourth vision. This one deals with both Israel's restoration and gives us perspective on our own restoration with God.

Zechariah 3:1-10

¹Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. ²The Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?"

³Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. ⁴The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes."

Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you."

⁵Then I said, "Put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the Lord stood by.

⁶The angel of the Lord gave this charge to Joshua: ⁷“This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘If you will walk in obedience to me and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here.

⁸“Listen, High Priest Joshua, you and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. ⁹See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.

¹⁰“In that day each of you will invite your neighbor to sit under your vine and fig tree,’ declares the Lord Almighty.”

O – This is yet another courtroom scene that is popular among the prophets. Identify the four characters in this “legal scene,” (including Zechariah) and call out any interesting details that capture your mind.

(The angel of the Lord Almighty, Zechariah, Joshua the high priest, and Satan the accuser.)

O – Verses 1-3: As Satan does throughout Scripture, he represents the “accuser,” undermining God’s will and sabotaging humanity. The High Priest Joshua represents Israel, the “burning stick” from captivity is Israel in Babylonian exile, and the filthy clothes represent Israel’s long history of idolatry and rebellion. Now that we appreciate the metaphors, what does the Angel of the Lord say in response? What meaning and metaphors come to mind in verses 4 and 5? (Remember, everything said to Joshua is meant for Israel.)

I – What is behind the Lord’s charge to Israel given to the priest Joshua?

(Israel has always been called to obedience before the Lord and to have a role and be a sign to all the courts and nations (verse 7). This is yet another re-affirmation of this role.)

I/A – The people of God need these repeated scenes and calls to obedience. Here as we near the end of Lent, let us examine the root issues of why we so often fail at fulfilling the call the Lord has placed in our lives. What have we learned from Zechariah and the prophets? How does it inform us as we head to Easter?

A – The incredible thing about this scene in Zechariah is that it can symbolically be repeated in everyone’s life. We each can take the place of Joshua, be accused by “the Satan,” be rescued from the fire of Hell, be forgiven, and be made pure through and because of the Lord. Meditate on this scene for a few moments; soak in all the tension and beauty. How can we walk out of this courtroom different from how we walked in?

- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
- b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?)
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
- e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.