



# MONDAY 30 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

## Read: Zechariah 7:1-6

### **Plug In...**

Special memorials, sacrifices, and fasting were scheduled on the Israelite calendar (e.g., Leviticus 16; 23). However, the Old Testament holds no record of a required fast for the fifth month. What then is significant about the fifth month? On the fifth month of the calendar Nebuchadnezzar demolished the original temple (see: 2 Kings 25:8-21). Demolition confirmed the exile. Most likely, this fast emerged to mark that day of collapse. Ever since, the people pleaded on the fifth month for God to come back and restore the temple. Fasting requested God to end the exile and restore the temple. With the temple beginning to stand again, the question was prompted: "should we still fast?" Of course living outside of their homeland was miserable, oppression from foreigners was not fun. Of course they would like to be restored, like to begin living the good life. The beginnings of the temple rebuild blew the winds of change through.

God replies to their question with a question: "did you fast for me?"

## **Chew It Over...**

Think of a time when you felt *used*. If you're famous or well-known, have lots of money, good looks, sometimes it becomes apparent that people want what you can give them, not you yourself. Think through what would *using* God look like? It has been asked before: *Would you care if God was taken away but you still received all his blessings?*

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Ask for that relationship *with* God. Seek to gaze on His glory, to know Him for Himself.



The Lakes

TUESDAY 31 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Zechariah 7:7-14 & Romans 2:25-29

### **Plug In...**

When David & Solomon ruled the kingdom, Jerusalem and all Israel rested and prospered. They were in the Promised Land, it burst with fruit, and enemies were no longer a threat (2 Samuel 7:1). God reminds the people in Zechariah's day that experiencing blessing can be a false reference point as to security with God.

### **Chew It Over...**

What are the reference points that show you chase the giver more than the gifts? Over time, God comes in mercy to warn people, but here God pinpoints a problem as to why people do not heed the warning – what is identified as their sticking point?

### **Prayer Suggestion**

Commit to God some people in your life that appear to be stuck in this same-old dynamic that has plagued every human. Ask God by His Spirit to do something to their wedged hearts.



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WEDNESDAY 01 JUNE 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

## Read: Zechariah 8:1-8

### **Plug In...**

Throughout Zechariah, the facts are Israel has been sinful and deserve what has happened to them in the past. The facts are that even as they've started to return to Judah many keep on being sinful and will deserve the judgements to come (remember Zechariah 1:1-6). The facts are the High Priest is found with filthy clothes and can't represent them; the facts are that the people hear the words of the prophets but "turn their backs...cover their ears...make their hearts hard...will not listen" (Zechariah 7:11-12).

Thank God for another fact! The LORD Almighty has chosen Zion, Jerusalem, and promised that people can be there with Him in a city of peace and vibrant life. Fact: God is jealous for Zion. He has promised to save people from *their* facts of filthiness and hard hearts. How God is going to do this is not spelt out here, but it is promised that He will do it.

## **Chew It Over...**

This part of the Bible shows people have been disciplined through exile, and even upon return, and upon seeing blessings emerge still, have this problem they can't get over. The problem is sticky and will sink them again. How does this dynamic describe sin more accurately for us? We often focus on the contours of sin: the bad actions or thoughts we do and think. What else needs to be understood about the nature of sin which this sticky-cycle communicates? [Consider the Bible's cycle of: in the garden, exiled out of it; a return to a special land, then kicked out; now another return to the special land and....here we go again?]

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Pray for God's Spirit to unlock people from the sticky prison of sin. Pray that God does the miracle on people's hearts that they need.



The Lakes

THURSDAY 02 JUNE 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Zechariah 8:9-15 & 1 John 4:7-19

### **Plug In...**

The Bible demonstrates sin is more than just doing evil things. Sin disables you from the ability to ever follow God from your own strength. Should God give you good things, incentives, provide blessings, sin wraps so tightly around a person that even those most close to His revelation inevitably turn their back on Him (i.e., Israel; the Jews of Zechariah's day).

Zechariah hears God determines to break the cycle. He will not leave people anchored down by their own unsuccessful sinful hearts. Again God promises to do something guaranteeing success. [Notice the image of a seed that actually grows up and produces a crop – 8:12.]

### **Chew It Over...**

Think how the words "Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong" (8:13) are words of faith in God's promise. Why is it that many who practice a type of religion end up still being so afraid? Why do the people who listened to Zechariah's message have no more fear? What is it about Christians that they can approach life fearlessly?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Thank and praise God that confidence has replaced fear because of Jesus Christ. Thank God for joining us to Christ and counting us as Christ. Ask God to change up everything we do so our actions come from a place of confidence, no longer fear.



The Lakes

FRIDAY 03 JUNE 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

## Read: Zechariah 8:16-19

### **Plug In...**

Beginning this week's look at Zechariah was the question: "should we still fast?" (7:3). God answered with a question: "do you really fast and feast for me?" (7:5-6). God's volley back interrogates the people as to whether they are after just the gifts or the Giver Himself.

Here, the original question receives its answer. There will be a time when all the sad fasts will turn into happy festivals/feasts (8:19). Yet, God explained that the road from fast to feasting is to chase after God Himself. Also, God explained a massive blockage to that endeavour. The evidence of the blockage is one does not do the things God is on about (justice, compassion, etc). God explained that He will do something that creates a people no longer blocked and trapped; a people who will end up feasting! The evidence that you're part of this group is doing the things that God is on about (truth, and peace).

## **Chew It Over...**

Consider 8:19. If you trust that God is going to make you right and bring you to the feast, then you will go on to love truth and peace, do justice, and have compassion on others. The cost to you now to do those things is nothing to be afraid of when you have confidence that you'll be feasting and splashing around in an inheritance given by God. Conversely, consider what beliefs must lie underneath the person who feels they simply must rip another off, or deny another justice?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

This Sunday at The Lakes is *Compassion Sunday*. Compassion Australia work hard to rescue, and prevent children from being abandoned, trafficked, abused, and exploited. They work in a way that builds long-term relationships between a child (and their family) and the local church. Pray that justice can be found for these children, especially as they discover the gospel of God's incredible love for them. Pray that they respond to Jesus. Pray that we each may be able to bear the cost for this mission because our gospel shows us ultimately we've got nothing to lose.



The Lakes

## WEEKEND 04-05 JUNE 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

## Read: Zechariah 8:20-23 & Matthew 22:1-14

### **Plug In...**

This week in Zechariah, God promised He will intervene on the hard-human-heart. He will do something so a people that are solidly His, who are locked to loving Him, who follow Him, who will live with Him where He dwells actually exist. They are called a 'remnant' (8:11). The 'remnant' is permanent, eternal.

The twist here is that He is going to do this work on a worldwide scale. The feast is in Jerusalem. The remnant of Jews are hosting it. And, God is sending invites across the world for everyone to come.

### **Chew It Over...**

How often do you think, "I must get those invitations out"? Whether it's a wedding, or a birthday, or simply texting a few people to make sure they come Saturday night for the BBQ, we find ourselves sending out invitations. While it is fun to go to weddings, parties, and BBQ's, Zechariah reminds us that next week or next month is time so that the Big Feast invites can go out. Have you thought about the invite list you're responsible for? What do you need to do to get your invites to their destination?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Thank the hosting Jew (Jesus) for hosting the Feast. Thank Jesus for extending the invitation to you. Thank him for providing the right clothing to be at the feast of God. Ask for help in keeping up a preoccupation with sending invites for people to come hear the good news.