

## Study 3: Enter the branch

Zechariah 6:9-15

### Icebreaker

If you were King or Queen for a day, what's one traffic law you would bring in immediately?

### Where are we headed?

In the last two weeks we've started on Zechariah's night visions: God will return to his city Jerusalem, the temple will be rebuilt and sin will be sent packing. So far Zechariah has been "seeing" things happen. Now for the first time he is told to do something.

### Prayer

Invite the group to pray with you.

### Observation and interpretation

Read 6:9-15. This is a very dense passage which we're going to spend some time unpacking. But very quickly...

- What is the symbolic action in this passage?
- What happens to the crown? (v11 and v14)

The branch is code for "Messiah" or "king". What goes in the Branch's job description?

Who is the Branch in this passage? Is it High Priest Joshua, or someone else?

Read Zech 4:6-14. From this passage, who is missing in chapter 6 that you would expect to turn up again in chapter 6?

Something weird is going on here! To get some clues, we're going to need to do some hunting. Divide these passages between the group:

- 2Sam 7:12-17
- 1 Chronicles 3:1-24 (zoom in on verse 17-19 and skim the rest)
- Ezra 5:1-2
- Zech 3:8-9
- Zech 4:6-9

Based on this information, what reasons can you think of for a priest, Joshua, being temporarily given the crown – and not an actual Davidic king? Where does this leave God's promises?

### **Implications**

Verse 15 makes God's promise conditional: "if you diligently obey the Lord your God". What good are God's promises if humans can spoil them?

Read Matthew 16:15-22. How does Jesus think he fulfils Zechariah's prophecy? How do we fit into the story?

Here Jesus identifies himself as the Christ, the fulfilment of Old Testament expectations about the temple-builder King. Jesus is the final and greater Zerubbabel who will build his temple (the church) by his Spirit.

Read Zech 4:6 and 4:10. What encouragement do these words hold for Christians in 2014 in Sydney?

### **Prayer to close**

#### **Theological and pastoral notes for leaders:**

- Zerubbabel, one of the last in David's royal line, suddenly disappears from the picture after recommencing building of the temple. This raises all sorts of theories. Darius, the Persian king by this stage, spent a lot of time and energy squashing rebellions all around Jerusalem. Zerubbabel's temple building may have come to the attention of the Persian empire and been interpreted as an act of independence and therefore treason. It is possible he was imprisoned for a time, we just don't know. But either way Chapter 6 is something of a transition point, where the focus shifts from Zerubbabel's temple building to a future, perfect Messiah who will build God's house and God's people.