

The Promise of a Coming King

Summary and Goal

In this session, we are going to look at God's declaration to His people regarding the rebuilding of the temple. The small second temple was but a foretaste of the ultimate temple that God would offer to His children—the Messiah. Across the Old Testament, God was working among His people to prepare them for the Messiah, and neither their stumbling nor the furious opposition of His enemies could thwart His plans. His purposes would be accomplished. This coming Temple would be far superior to the temple they were rebuilding, and even the first temple that Solomon built. The Messiah would provide a sacrifice that would end all sacrifices. His work would not be easy, but He would accomplish it, and we will be saved because of it.

Session Outline

1. God will send a Branch who will take away iniquity (Zech. 3:8-10; 6:12).
2. God will send a King who will bring peace (Zech. 6:13; 9:9-10).
3. God will send a Shepherd who will be struck down for the sheep (Zech. 13:7-9).

Background Passage: Zechariah

Session in a Sentence

God promised to send a Branch—Jesus—who would be struck down for sin to bring peace.

Christ Connection

God promised to send a Priest, a King, and a Shepherd to remove iniquity, bring peace, and be struck down for the sheep. Jesus is the One who fulfilled these prophecies as the perfect intercessor, ruler, and sacrifice for God's people. Jesus laid down His life on the cross as the substitute to pay sin's penalty and bring peace between God and sinners.

Missional Application

Because we have peace with God through Christ, we strive to live at peace with others and advance peace in the world around us to reflect the rule of our King.

Group Time


GROUP MEMBER CONTENT

Introduction

EXPLAIN: Use the paragraph in the DDG (p. 84) to help group members imagine a child's anticipation of an impending trip to Disney World.

Imagine preparing to take children to Disney World. They are old enough to fully appreciate the experience, but they have never been there. Of course, they would be very excited, counting down the days. The pending departure would captivate their attention and even motivate their behavior. Their expectations would be nearly all-consuming.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 What was an outing, trip, or vacation, whether as a child, on your own, or with your own family, that captivated your attention as you looked forward to it? *(be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)*

EXPLAIN: As believers in Christ, we too long for a day in the future when we will enjoy what is to come. More specifically, we look with longing for the day when Jesus will come back and make the world right again. We can be confident in His future coming because we can look back at His previous coming. We know the promise is sure because we have seen what Jesus did at the cross and at the empty tomb, as well as the work He does to transform our hearts every day. The Israelites too had to believe the promise of the Messiah, whom the Lord assured them would come. Zechariah's prophecy gave specific hope for God's people in spite of constant opposition.

SUMMARIZE: In this session, we are going to look at God's declaration to His people regarding the rebuilding of the temple. The small second temple was but a foretaste of the ultimate temple that God would offer to His children—the Messiah. This coming Temple would be far superior to the temple they were rebuilding, and even the first temple that Solomon built. The Messiah would provide a sacrifice that would end all sacrifices. His work would not be easy, but He would accomplish it, and we will be saved because of it. From the Book of Zechariah, we will see three distinct characteristics that describe our once and coming Savior.

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Point 1: God will send a Branch who will take away iniquity (Zech. 3:8-10; 6:12).

READ Zechariah 3:8-10 and 6:12 (DDG p. 85).

^{3:8} Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. ⁹ For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. ¹⁰ In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree.”


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^{6:12} And say to him, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD.

EXPLAIN: Reference the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 85) as you show how Zechariah depicted the coming of the Messiah with the imagery of a **branch**, a **vine** and **fig tree**, and a **stone**.

The Book of Zechariah is full of meaningful imagery. In these verses we see pictures of a **branch**, a **vine** and **fig tree**, and a **stone**. Ultimately, all of these symbolic pictures show the Messiah for what He would be—our hope. He is the source of life, resurrection, salvation, adoption, and mission. Each of these pictures frames the way we see and understand Jesus Christ and shapes the way we obey Him and walk in faithfulness.

- The **branch** is a significant Old Testament messianic title (Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15). The imagery involves a sprout growing up out of a stump, life coming out of something dead. This portrayed hope and a new beginning to a struggling people.
- The **vine** and **fig tree** continue the metaphor of the branch. On the day the Branch comes to bring salvation, people and their neighbors will be included in the benefits of the Branch, pictured as sitting under a vine and enjoying its shade. This points to a new age when God’s chosen people will include both Jew and Gentile, signifying adoption in Christ (under the vine) and the work of missions (invitations to neighbors).
- The **stone** here most likely refers to the idea of a cornerstone, which is a reoccurring description of the Messiah in both the Old and New Testaments (Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6-7). The stone set before the high priest Joshua was set apart, something to build on, and it communicated the hope of atonement and salvation from sin.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 How should these images shape the way we obey and walk in faithfulness to Jesus? (no matter how dire our circumstances, we can obey God's commands, trusting that Jesus brings good out of hardship and suffering; we must rest in Christ for our salvation; we are expected to invite others into the joy of knowing Christ by faith; our actions should reflect that we are part of the building constructed on Christ, the cornerstone)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 85) to observe how Zechariah 3:9 points to the day when the Messiah, Jesus, would take away the sins of His people through the cross.

When verse 9 speaks of iniquity being removed on a single day, Zechariah was making a prophecy that looked forward to the day when the Messiah would come. He was speaking of the judicial forgiveness that comes to sinners through the cross of Jesus Christ. The high priest made sacrifices at the temple to cover the sins of the people, but this was a temporary measure. The Branch, the Messiah, our Great High Priest, made the final sacrifice for sins with His own life, and as He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

- Through the cross, Jesus accomplished what we could not; He paid our penalty for sin in His death. When we place our faith in Him, we are covered by His righteousness. In theological terms, we call this *imputed righteousness*: Jesus' righteousness is transmitted, or imputed, to those of us who are unrighteous but who have placed our faith in Jesus. This is how we can have confidence before God. We are not righteous in ourselves but have a borrowed righteousness—Jesus' righteousness—covering us, which grants us access into God's kingdom and His family. "A Christian is not perfect, just forgiven."
 - This doesn't mean we no longer sin, just that we are no longer penalized for sin. Sanctification, or growing in the image of Jesus, is the active process by which God actually makes us more like Him in terms of our character, helping us to walk farther and farther away from the practice of sin.
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FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 85).

Christ as Priest: As our Great High Priest, Jesus accomplishes the work of **reconciling** us to God. He is the One whose perfect righteousness is presented to the Father for our **justification**.

Essential Doctrine "Christ as Priest": As our Great High Priest, Jesus accomplishes the work of **reconciling** us to God. He is the One whose perfect righteousness is presented to the Father for our **justification**. He is the One who intercedes for us before the Father (Heb. 7:25; 9:24) and prays for us to remain faithful (Luke 22:31-32; John 17).

Point 2: God will send a King who will bring peace (Zech. 6:13; 9:9-10).

READ Zechariah 6:13 and 9:9-10 (DDG p. 86).

^{6:13} It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”

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^{9:9} Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 86) to establish that the Messiah was to occupy multiple roles: a ruler who would be a king *and* a priest.

Zechariah 6:13 points out that the Messiah is going to occupy multiple roles, roles that would not have been available to a single individual in the time of Zechariah. Specifically, the text describes a ruler who will be both a king *and* a priest. This ruled out the rulers of that day as kings and priests, by law, were two distinct roles of leadership for the Israelites. The Messiah would not only command the rule of nations but would also intercede spiritually on behalf of all those who have faith in Him.

- Imagine a human king ruling from a throne over his people, and then imagine another person, a priest, sharing that throne with him. Furthermore, imagine these two separate people peacefully sharing the rule over a kingdom. Of course, this is beyond imagination because we know the sinful and selfish tendencies of human beings. But One person—Jesus Christ, the Messiah—would fulfill both of these roles as one.
- This description of the Messiah’s versatility speaks to the ways in which God would use Him to accomplish His purposes. But it also makes clear that the Messiah would be greater than just the victorious ruler whom so many Israelites were looking for. Further, it points to His role as the Son of God. Only One who comes from God could rightly occupy, and occupy well, both of these roles. This Messiah is like no one who would ever come before or after Him.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



How does Jesus fulfill the roles of King and Priest in our lives? (He rules over us to direct us to what is good and away from what is harmful; He protects us from our enemies; He made the one sacrifice to save us from our sin; He intercedes for us with the Father that our sins would not be counted against us; He brings us peace with God and others)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 86) to show how the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9-10 points to how Jesus will come as the Messiah looking to advance a kingdom of peace.

Zechariah 9:9-10 points directly to Jesus' kingship, including its humble origins. This is the prophecy describing the coming King as one who would ride into Jerusalem—on what we now know as Palm Sunday—on a donkey (Matt. 21:1-9). With this image, the Lord shows the Messiah is going to advance a kingdom not of war but of peace. His reign will exist not only locally over the Jewish nation but will also extend to the ends of the earth and include people from every tribe and tongue.

- The Messiah's rule—Jesus' rule—will be and is characterized by peace. He will not wage war with the nations . . . yet. One day the Lord of Armies will rise to fight for the defense, well-being, and salvation of His people (Zech. 9:13-17), but first, the Lord Jesus will be the ambassador of peace. God sent His Son into the world not to condemn it but to save it (John 3:17).
- Christ invites His followers to play a role in the growth and rule of His peaceful kingdom as He encourages us to witness to His kingdom of glory and salvation all the way to the ends of the earth.


Commentary: In Matthew 10:34-35, Jesus said He came not to bring peace on earth but a sword. In this context, He is speaking about the divisive nature of His ministry. Some will believe, and they will become agents of peace (10:13); others will reject Christ and His followers and refuse the peace of knowing Him.

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 86).

Christ as King: To restore His broken world, God promised a King who would **deliver** His people and **restore** all of creation. The promise of a coming King finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and looks forward to its **perfection** when Jesus returns for His bride, the **church**.

Essential Doctrine “Christ as King”: God has always been King over His creation, whether in heaven or on earth. Yet some of His creatures in both realms have rebelled against Him, leaving destruction in their wake. To restore His broken world, God promised a King who would **deliver** His people and **restore** all of creation. The promise of a coming King finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and looks forward to its **perfection** when Jesus returns for His bride, the **church**.

PACK ITEM 11: KING OF KINGS: Read the **D. L. Moody quote** on this poster and ask group members the following question.

 How can we honor our humble King of kings as we face the terrors of this world? (we live believing He is coming again to make all things right; we face our struggles with humility as Jesus did; we don't seek our own honor and praise but live for the glory of Jesus; we lay down our lives in service to others)

Point 3: God will send a Shepherd who will be struck down for the sheep (Zech. 13:7-9).

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Zechariah 13:7-9 (DDG p. 87).

⁷ “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,” declares the LORD of hosts. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones.” ⁸ In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. ⁹ And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are my people’; and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 87) to emphasize that Scripture describes the Messiah as the Lord’s Shepherd who will be struck down for the sake of His sheep. Then comment on the Lord’s commitment to purify His people.

The coming Messiah is here described as the Lord’s Shepherd, and He is to be struck down. The One who stands with the Lord is, in fact, the one and only Son of God, and His sheep, His followers, would be scattered. Of course, this pictures the future arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus, when His disciples abandoned Him (Matt. 26:31). But the Lord promises to preserve a remnant whom He will test and purify that they will call on Him alone as their God, and they will be His people.

Voices from the Church

“It was not nails that held Jesus to that wretched cross; it was his unqualified resolution, out of love for his Father, to do his Father’s will—and, within that framework, it was his love for sinners like me.”¹

—D. A. Carson

- The Lord affirms the veracity of His believers’ faith by strengthening them through trials (Jas. 1:2-4). Ultimately their faith will prove to be more valuable than precious metals (1 Pet. 1:5-7). This refined faith and the promise of the presence of the Lord are what will fuel the followers of Christ to declare to the nations that the Lord Jesus is their God and Savior.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



In what ways has God refined your faith, even if through trials? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 87) to point out how the Shepherd’s persecution and death reveals that God is in control even over the most painful moments in world history; therefore, we can trust Him in the midst of our suffering.

The persecution and death that would rise up against the Lord’s Shepherd reminds us that God’s sovereignty extends even to the most painful of moments. This matters because it enables God’s people to trust Him, knowing there is purpose in our suffering. The pain that Jesus experienced was part of God’s plan to redeem humanity. The Lord Himself called for the “sword” to strike the Shepherd, reminiscent of Isaiah’s statement that the Lord was pleased to crush His Suffering Servant for our salvation (Isa. 53:10).

- We can say unequivocally that God is not, nor has He ever been, the author of sin or evil. The Bible is clear on that point (see Jas. 1:13; 1 John 1:5).
 - The Bible is also clear, however, that God can allow and even cause pain to occur for the sake of accomplishing His purposes (Rom. 8:18,28). The greatest example of this is the life and death of Jesus. Jesus died on the cross at the hands of wicked men, but this was God’s good work in Jesus’ life to redeem us all (Acts 2:22-24; 4:27-28). This does not mean that God authored the sin those evil men perpetrated against Jesus, but it does mean that God planned and permitted it so that, in His wisdom, His purposes might be accomplished, namely, our salvation from sin.
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FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 87).

Christ as Substitute: Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with humankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal **obedience**, and in His substitutionary death on the cross, He made provision for the **redemption** of humanity from sin.

Essential Doctrine “Christ as Substitute”: At the heart of the atonement is Jesus Christ substituting Himself for sinners as He died on the cross. This truth is seen against the backdrop of the Old Testament sacrificial system, which provided a picture of humanity’s need for sin to be covered and guilt to be removed by an innocent sacrifice. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with humankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal **obedience**, and in His substitutionary death on the cross, He made provision for the **redemption** of humanity from sin.

My Mission

EXPLAIN: We have seen in the Book of Zechariah three distinct descriptions of the coming King: 1) a Branch who will take away iniquity; 2) a King who will bring peace; and 3) a Shepherd who will be struck down for His sheep. These three characteristics are fulfilled in Jesus, our Messiah and Savior, who laid down His life as a substitutionary sacrifice for sinners in order to achieve peace between God and man. If we are in Christ by repentance and faith, then we have peace with God, and because of that peace, we seek to promote and live at peace with others as we proclaim the gospel of our selfless King.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 88), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God's Word.

Because we have peace with God through Christ, we strive to live at peace with others and advance peace in the world around us to reflect the rule of our King.

- **Of what do you need to repent to live in and enjoy the peace that God offers through faith in Christ?**
- **What are some ways your group can strive for peace within your group and church?**
- **Who in your life needs to hear the good news about peace with God and others made available through the sacrifice of King Jesus?**

Voices from the Church

“God lives in peace and sends the Prince of Peace to rule in peace so we can experience peace. Pray for peace in your church, in your community, in your local politics, and in your nation. By being a person of peace, you are reflecting God's character and desire.”²

—Africa Study Bible

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Lord Jesus, You are the King we do not deserve but precisely the King we need. Unlike all other kings, You have taken away our sin, won for us an everlasting peace, and did so by dying on the cross for us. We thank You for Your selfless sacrifice that reconciles us to the Father. Help us manifest the fruit of the Holy Spirit as we strive to live at peace with others while serving You, our selfless, faithful King. Amen.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the **Daily Study** devotions in their DDG (pp. 89-91), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use **Encourage One Another** (p. 92) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God's Word.

Additional Commentary

Point 1: God will send a Branch who will take away iniquity (Zech. 3:8-10; 6:12).

“The Lord uses this vision of a court scene to reveal future events, and he announces to Joshua the high priest that he is going to bring forth *my servant, the Branch* (3:8; 6:12). The prophet Isaiah had already announced this Branch (Isa. 4:2; 11:1). Jeremiah followed and said the Branch would be a king from the line of David who would be called ‘The LORD Our Righteous Saviour’ (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-18). In this context of cleansing from sin, the Branch is without doubt a symbol for the Messiah Jesus. The Lord sets another symbol for the Messiah in front of Joshua, a stone with *seven eyes* and an *inscription* (3:9; Ps. 118:20-23; Dan. 2:34-35,44-45). Zechariah later mentions ‘the seven eyes of the LORD’ (4:10), and the Lamb of God also has seven eyes (Rev. 5:6). Exactly what the eyes and inscription represent here is unclear. But the statement that the Lord *will remove the sin of this land in a single day* appears to refer to the crucifixion of Jesus. The vision ends with the promise that *in that day* God’s people will enjoy peace and prosperity (3:10). Sadly, we who have had our sins removed and are saved still yield to sin. But in the fullness of time, God will remove our old clothes of sin and clothe us with righteousness (Isa. 61:10; 2 Cor. 5:17).”³

“Joshua is to be crowned as a symbol of the reality to come, **the Branch**, a reference to Jeremiah 33:15. Zechariah reiterates Jeremiah’s promise of a coming king who will flourish and branch out and **build the temple of the LORD** and will bear royal honor, reflecting the authority and legitimacy of the king’s rule.”⁴

Point 2: God will send a King who will bring peace (Zech. 6:13; 9:9-10).

“The reestablishment of a throne in Jerusalem was not intended. Rather Joshua clearly represents the future messianic Priest-King. The **Branch** (i.e., the crowned priest) would build the temple and would supersede and transcend what was accomplished in Zechariah’s day (cp. 3:8-10). These two offices—the king and the priest—would come together for the first time in the messianic age. As Priest, He would build the temple; as King, He would rule (cp. Ps. 110). The making of this **crown** and its placement in the **temple**, through which the crown became **a memorial**, were meant to act as a reminder giving to those living in Zechariah’s day hope that these things would surely come to pass. The crown’s placement on **the high priest** Joshua is meant to dismiss any misunderstanding of the significance made clear by uniting the spiritual (priest) and civil (king) authority in the Messiah, Jesus Christ (cp. Heb. 5:5-10; Rev. 3:21; 5:9-14; 11:15; 20:4-6). God had not forsaken His covenantal promise that He would dwell with His people. The temple, too, was a form of surety for the Lord’s covenant.”⁵

“The Messiah King will come to his people *riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey* (9:9c). In the ancient Middle East, the donkey was the preferred means of transport (see Judg. 5:10; 10:4; 12:14). The Messiah does not come riding a horse, which is associated with warfare (see Deut. 17:16; 20:1; Ezek. 26:10). He does not come as a conqueror but as God’s humble and peaceful servant. This prophecy was fulfilled in Christ’s first coming when he entered Jerusalem ‘riding on a donkey’ (9:9c; see Matt. 21:15; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-38; John 12:12-15) ... *He will proclaim peace to the nations*, not just to the land of Israel (9:10; see Isa. 9:5-7). The extent of his reign will be universal, *from sea to sea and from the River* [the Euphrates] *to the ends of the earth* (Ps. 72:8-11). This world will have lasting peace only when the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, comes to establish his universal, peaceful kingdom. Then there will be no more wars or conflicts.”⁶

Point 3: God will send a Shepherd who will be struck down for the sheep (Zech. 13:7-9).

“Though the identity of the **shepherd** is ambiguous, the overall point of the passage is clear: to purge and refine, separating the true from the false. God desires followers worthy of the affirmation that **they are my people**. God **scattered** them and cut off **two-thirds** in order to gain a remnant that would sincerely say, **the LORD is our God**. Possibilities for the meaning of ‘my shepherd’ being struck include a flashback to striking the arm of the worthless shepherd (11:17). Alternatively, Jesus’s quote of the lines with regard to his death and his disciples falling away (Matt. 26:31) suggests that ‘shepherd’ may have anticipated the messianic King. However, it is possible that Jesus was using the verse proverbially rather than declaring the fulfillment of Zechariah’s prediction.”⁷

“Because of the loss of the shepherd, the flock will be scattered, the expected result of a flock without leadership (1 Kings 22:17//2 Chron. 18:16; Ezek. 34:5,6,12,21). This scattering leaves the ‘little ones’ (cf. Jer. 49:20; 50:45) vulnerable to attack. The attack comes from God, who turns his hand against them, a phrase used elsewhere to refer to his judgment (Ps. 81:14; Isa. 1:25; Ezek. 38:12; Amos 1:8). The reference in Isaiah 1:25 is significant because there one finds a reference also to ‘refining,’ as in Zechariah 13:7-9. This indicates that God will discipline the flock (‘little ones’) in order to purify them.”⁸

References

1. D. A. Carson, *Scandalous: The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 30.
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4. Iain M. Duguid, “Zechariah,” in *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 1758-59, n. 6:12.
5. Lauren Johnson, “Zechariah,” in *The Study Bible for Women* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2014), 1221, n. 6:9-15.
6. Yoilah Yilpet, “Zechariah,” in *Africa Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1111-12.
7. D. Brent Sandy, “Zechariah,” in *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2017), 1463, n. 13:7-9.
8. Mark J. Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, in *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015) [Wordsearch].