



"And now I am no more in the world,  
but these are in the world..." (John 17:11).

Use this recent news story to help your students see the relevance  
of this week's lesson from the Standard Lesson Commentary®  
or Standard Lesson Quarterly®.

### **HOPE DESTROYED**

For a couple of years now, at least some have hoped that the Iraq War of 2003–2011 would result in stability in that area of the world. Now it appears that those hopes are being dashed. Last week, the Sunni-Shiite battle within Islam that has torn Syria apart spilled over into Iraq. This week, Iran sent in a top-ranking general as an advisor, and the U.S. sent troops to protect the American embassy. Iraq appears to be on the brink of collapse, and other nations fear the fighting will spread across the region.

### **HOPE RENEWED**

Hopelessness reigned as the people of Judah experienced the destruction of their nation at the hands of the Babylonian Empire (ironically, modern Iraq) and the captivity that resulted. Despair presented itself anew after the captivity ended as those trying to rebuild the temple faced opposition. Renewed hope came when God, through his prophets Haggai and Zechariah, promised to bless his chosen leaders. The real source of hope was that their success would not come about because of human effort, but because the Spirit of God was at work.

1. How might the Spirit of God be at work in the Middle East right now?
2. Are you more pessimistic about the future than a year ago? Why, or why not?
3. How does the promise of God's Spirit working in human events affect your view of life?
4. How can we use Zechariah 4:6 to keep from becoming discouraged when trouble comes?
5. When was a time you believe God worked through you to reverse discouragement in others and provide renewed hope in difficult circumstances?

—*Charles R. Boatman*

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