

## 37 – Haggai: Your Priorities are Wrong! God is First.

- **Haggai means “festive” or “festival.”** Haggai's ministry began on a new moon festival and the book records the festivities which will be enjoyed when Yahweh rules in the Day of the Lord.
- This is the **most precisely dated book of the Bible**, with the dates of each sermon given to the exact day. The beginning of Darius' reign is well established at 522 BC. This indicates the Jews are in the “times of the Gentiles” under Gentile rule (before this time, the prophets dated their books according to the reign of the kings in Israel and Judah, but the kingdom of Israel no longer exists). This is the time shortly after they returned from the Babylonian captivity. Haggai is a “post exilic” or after captivity book. Most of the minor prophets concern themselves with judgment on Judah, Israel and their enemies before the captivity. Now they have returned to the land (a small remnant). Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are the last three of the minor prophets, and are all “post captivity.”
- We recall from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah that the work on the temple had begun, but was interrupted with harassment from enemies and even inside problems. When this work halted, the people went about other more personal business, leaving the Temple unfinished. God had something to say about that. It is interesting to note that **the construction on the Temple resumed in 516 BC, which was exactly 70 years after its destruction.** The time line for this book begins in 606 BC with the first invasion by Nebuchadnezzar and first removal of the Jews to Babylon. This was followed by two more invasions, including the final in 586 when the Temple was destroyed. The first return to the land of Israel was in 536 BC (70 years after first invasion), and the Temple is finally completed in 516 BC (70 years after its destruction). Amazing how precise God is in his prophecies and fulfillments!
- The **central message of this book is about misplaced priorities – in this case the rebuilding of the Temple.** Haggai shames and motivates the people into finishing the rebuilding of the Temple, which they delayed for 14 years. God has priorities, and if we ignore them, He will intervene.
- Haggai speaks through **four “sermons” or messages.** He addresses Zerubbabel (the civil governor) and Joshua (the High Priest). He is a man of action, and encourages the people's action on God's behalf.
- The time frame of this book is exactly 3 months and 14 days. There are five very specific dates mentioned in this book, one for each message (4 from Haggai, one from the people).
- Haggai is the **second shortest book in the Old Testament**, only Obadiah is shorter. It may be a very short book, but is power-packed. **COMMENTARY: “... few prophets have succeeded in packing into such brief compass so much spiritual common sense as Haggai did.”** (F. Gaebelain)



### Highlights

| 1 <sup>st</sup> Message 1:1-15<br>Rebuke and Response   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Message 2:1-9<br>God's Presence with Them  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Message 2:10-19<br>Uncleanness, Rightness  | 4 <sup>th</sup> Message 2:20-23<br>Signet and Sovereign King  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ conflict of interest (1-4)</li> <li>▪ “Consider your ways” (5-7), unsatisfying lives</li> <li>▪ Get back to rebuilding the Temple (8-11)</li> <li>▪ People respond and obey (12-15)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ God promises His presence with them even, and encourages them though they may be discouraged by the smaller, less grand temple</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The people's work is unclean to the Lord, so God withheld His blessing from them in the past</li> <li>▪ But now He promises blessing for their obedience</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ consummation of future promises</li> <li>▪ God uses Zerubbabel as an example of the coming King, and restoration of the Throne of David</li> </ul> |

- Haggai mentions that the people are **living in paneled houses** (1:4). This was an expensive luxury, as paneling had to be imported from Lebanon. They were spending their money on the wrong things.
- Twice Haggai uses the exhortation **“Consider your ways!”** God does not care about paneling, and paneling is not wrong, but the people were considering themselves before God. His house was in ruins and their homes were paneled. The same exhortation should apply to us today. Consider your ways!
- God says they **have been living very unfulfilled lives** (1:6). There’s a reason for that. He has made them that way! He made their “purses” with holes in them. They couldn’t seem to get ahead of the game. They were consumed with earthly things instead of God. God says if we put Him first, we will be blessed, but if we put our priorities in earthly things we will be frustrated and unfulfilled. **MAJOR LESSON FOR US!**
- The prophet points out that we (they and us) have a double priority, to please God and to glorify Him. We need to remember today that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit, of God Himself. This is our first (always!) priority. Our own temples often need cleaning and rebuilding.
- The **people heard and accepted the message** as coming from God. They responded obediently, worked hard for God, and turned their hearts back to him (1:12-15). Haggai kept preaching, however, because when we work for God, we must have the right motives. They had pride in the old temple, and were discouraged with this newly rebuilt temple (2:1-7). Pride is not a good motive to work for God.
- **“Lord of Hosts”** (or *Lord of the Heavenly Armies*) is used 12 times in this little book. This phrase is especially found in the post-exilic books (*52X in Zechariah!*), and is intended to give the Jews hope for their future because the most powerful One of the Universe is in control, and on their side.
- God provides the people **a lesson in cleanliness** (2:10-14) before Him by using the example of the priests. Holiness can’t be transferred, but unholiness can. We can’t transfer our holiness to something or someone else, but someone or something else’s unholiness can be transferred to us. The message is to stay away from sin! Sin contaminates everything and everyone.
- Haggai reminds the people (2:15-19) that when **we are not obedient, God keeps us from prospering** (prospering is not just about having worldly things, it is about a heart at peace, contentment.)
- **“I will shake heaven and earth. I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. I will overthrow the chariots And those who ride in them; The horses and their riders shall come down, Every one by the sword of his brother.”** (2:21b-22) This passage is addressed to the then governor of Jerusalem, Zerubbabel. It is clear that God has not done these things yet, and Zerubbabel is now *“sleeping with His fathers”* as the Old Testament says. This, then, is an end time prophecy revealing that God will indeed destroy all their enemies and **restore the Throne of David**. An encouraging promise for people struggling to rebuild their city, their nation and their lives. He uses the current “governor” Zerubbabel to represent the coming King of Israel (Messiah during Millennium). (2:20-23)
- Zerubbabel was in the line of kings, and could have qualified as a king, but he was a descendent of Jeconiah, and as such, could not sit on the throne (his line was cursed by God). A **signet ring is a symbol of authority**, and God is saying that right now Zerubbabel is a symbol of the authority (The Sovereign King Jesus) that He will bring over Jerusalem much later.



### IMPORTANT LESSONS FROM HAGGAI

- God’s work is top priority (*our priority is to please Him and glorify Him*)
- Courage comes from knowing God is present
- Peace comes from the presence of God
- The solution to discouragement is having a divine perspective (the hope of the future)
- Sin contaminates everything
- God’s blessings begin the moment we turn to Him (*it is never too late to start obeying Him*)
- Everything is in God’s control (*even the nations of this world*)
- Disobedience brings discipline, and lack of personal fulfillment
- Obedience guarantees blessing
- God always keeps His promises (and covenants)