

HAGGAI

INTRODUCTION

1. Only three Old Testament prophets are from the post-exilic period: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.
2. Daniel and Ezekiel prophesied during the exile.
3. The remaining prophets performed their ministries prior to the exile in Babylon.

About 16 years before the earliest of these three prophets began his ministry the first group of exiles came back to Jerusalem. Cyrus allowed Zerubbabel to lead about 50,000 Jews back to their homeland in 536 B.C. These people began to rebuild the temple but soon became discouraged and quit.

With only the foundation laid, the temple was abandoned until Haggai and Zechariah came along. We shall see how the people were stirred to complete the temple and renew their religious devotions.

Haggai and Zechariah are credited with getting the temple completed in 515 B.C. Haggai started a work in 520 B.C. Haggai rebuked and admonished; Zechariah encouraged and looked to brighter days.

The common message of these prophets may be summed up as follows:

1. Return to the right ways of the Lord.
2. Spearhead a movement for restoration in the spiritual lives of their contemporaries.
3. Appeal for a sincere return to the will of God already given to them.
4. Challenge the people to renew the spiritual vitality of the covenant nation.

The Lord needed one who could take a message from Himself, convey it to the people, and get results. Haggai achieved this. Haggai returned from Babylon with the remnant under Zerubbabel. He was a man with a single idea: build the temple.

God raised up Haggai for the purpose of arousing the people to action.

Haggai dates his work, as the second year of the reign of Darius, which would be 520 B.C.

Upon their return to Jerusalem, 536 B.C., the Jews erected or restored the altar of sacrifices to God and laid the foundation of the temple. They ceased work on the temple until Haggai and Zechariah were called to the work of arousing their fellow Jews to complete the work began sixteen years earlier.

Some lessons we can learn from Haggai.

1. Faithfulness and material blessings are directly connected.
2. Discouragement is not an adequate reason for neglecting duties even when they seem to be encompassed with difficulty.
3. When a good work is awaiting its accomplishment, the time to do it is now.

Chapter 1

Verses 1-6

Haggai rebukes the people for their religious indifference and admonishes them to build the temple.

The first message was directed to Zerubbabel, the governor, and to Joshua, the high priest. They were the leaders of the people and should have considered themselves responsible for completing the temple and for the lack of enthusiasm that had been shown toward the task.

Verse 2

“This people” instead of “My people,” indicates God’s attitude toward the people and His reluctance to claim them as His own.

Verses 3-4

They had used their energies and resources to build themselves homes of luxury and comfort while the house of God lay in waste.

Verse 5

“Consider your ways” literally means “set your heart on your ways.”

Verse 6

Because of their actions God’s blessings had been meager.

Verses 7-11

Haggai’s rebuke is now followed with a challenge: “Get busy!” Build the house and God will take pleasure in it and be glorified and He will bless the people. The people were expecting much and received little.

To be eagerly zealous for one’s material welfare and house, running enthusiastically to care for it but negligent in his responsibility to the Lord, is to invite retributive consequences.

Verse 10

They had failed God and so He withheld the dew which was essential for a harvest.

Verses 12-15

Haggai’s rebuke and challenge got results. The people began to work on the house of God.

Verse 12

Remnant means a small part of the whole. God never promised to redeem or bring back all of Israel, only those that would return to Him with all their heart.

Verse 13

God offers the people a word of encouragement and assurance, “I am with you.” This is the assurance they needed and the people began to work on the house of the Lord.

Chapter 2

Verses 1-5

A second message is now delivered to the people. They needed encouragement. The temple they were building seemed so insignificant in comparison to Solomon's temple. The leaders were encouraged to be good examples for the people. Nothing which comes within the promise of God's will is impossible to His people. While God provides the strength, the believer must do his part, he must work.

God encourages them by giving assurance that they will have what they need to complete the temple.

Verses 6-9

A "Messianic promise" is made. Nations would rise and fall at the time of Christ.

The Medo-Persian Empire was shaken and so was Alexander's empire, as well as were Syria, Egypt, and finally Rome.

Hebrews 12:26 speaks of the shaking of nations. It was the removing of the old order and the founding of a new one which Isaiah had in mind.

The glory of this new order will be greater than the glory of the old order. This is fulfilled in the temple built by Christ, the church, now filled with the glory of the divine presence.

Verses 10-14

Haggai's third message was spoken to the priests. They were to distinguish between the clean and the unclean and were to teach the Law to the people. The message was that the remnant was looking for God's blessing prematurely. First, they must cleanse themselves of their defilement, and then they could expect His presence among them and His blessing on them.

Verses 15-19

Israel's uncleanness and indifference had brought them calamities. If they will cleanse themselves and develop a zeal for God, He would restore prosperity.

Verse 17

God smote the people with calamities trying to turn their hearts back to Him.

Verses 18-19

From the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month onward, God would bless His people. This day marks the turning point in their fortunes—things will be different. God will now bless them.

Verses 20-23

These verses contain Haggai's fourth message, a message of hope and assurance. God declares a complete overthrow of the heathen kingdom, their thrones, and all the implements of war.

Throughout history, God had used one heathen nation to destroy another heathen nation and then used a third nation to destroy that nation.

Zerubbabel is a faithful and true servant of God on whom God is pleased to bestow honor. The signet ring was considered precious because it was the authentic designation of the owner.

The honor bestowed on Zerubbabel was not realized in him as a person, but in his office and lineage.

Matthew confirms the fulfillment of this promise as he points out that Jesus is the heir to the throne of David through Coniah and Zerubbabel. (Matthew 1:12, 16)

The people returned to their homeland and God has assured them of temporal blessings, of the overthrow of the heathens, and the fulfillment of the spiritual promises through Zerubbabel.