

10. Haggai 520 B.C. (written in 520)

The book of Haggai has two chapters. It is a Post-Exilic Southern Kingdom book.

Author

As a post-exilic prophet to the Southern Kingdom, Haggai was the first prophet to hear “*the word of the Lord*” after the Jews returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. Nothing is known of his parentage or genealogy. His name means “festive.” Some believe he was one of the exiles who saw Solomon’s temple destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (2:3). If so, this prophecy, 70 years later, would make him an elderly prophet. He is unique among the prophets in that the people listened to his words and obeyed. In just four years (515 B.C.), the temple was completed.

Date

Haggai was written during the year 520 B.C., *in the second year of the Persian King Darius* (who became king in 522), *on the first day of the sixth month* (1:1). “He was a contemporary of Zechariah (and of Confucius)” [Ryrie Study Bible]. The whole book was written over a period of four months, between August and December of 520.

Background

In his two short chapters, Haggai affirmed the divine authority of his messages 25 times. He called himself “*the messenger of the Lord*” and he “*spoke by the commission of the Lord to the people*” (1:13). King David desired to build God a temple in Jerusalem, but God said that instead, David’s son Solomon would build the temple (2 Samuel 7:13). In 586, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem along with Solomon’s Temple, and carried the Jews into exile to Babylon (2 Kings 25:9). In 538, the Persians conquered the Babylonians and allowed the Jewish exiles to return, to rebuild the city and the temple (Ezra 6:3b-5). The temple rebuild had been delayed for at least 10 years (from about 530-520 B.C.), but after Haggai’s prophecy, it was completed four years later.



Purpose

The purpose of the prophecy of Haggai was to tell the people to “*rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,*” says the Lord (1:8; see also Ezra 5:1-2). The whole book is about a sin of omission. It is not about doing what they should not have done but about not doing what they should have done.

Key Verse

“*The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,*’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘*and in this place I will give peace,*’ declares the LORD of hosts” (2:9).

Theme

Subject: Building the temple of God, the church, the body of Christ,

Complement: is more important than building luxury into our own households

Outline

Prophecy #1 (1:1-15), August 29, to Zerubbabel, Governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the High Priest—The Call to Rebuild the Temple

Prophecy #2 (2:1-9), October 17, to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and “the remnant of the people” —The Promise of the Future Glory of the Temple

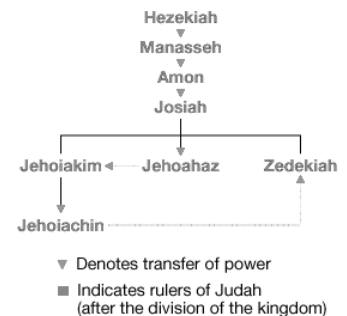
Prophecy #3 (2:10-19), December 18, to Joshua, the High Priest—to Illustrate the Present Blessings of Obedience

Prophecy #4 (2:20-23), also December 18, exclusively for Zerubbabel—A Messianic Prophecy Concerning Zerubbabel

Commentary

Prophecy #1 (1:1-15), August 29, to Zerubbabel, Governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the High Priest—The Call to Rebuild the Temple

Verse 1, *In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying—Darius became king of Persia in 522 B.C., and he appointed Zerubbabel as the governor over Judea, obviously because he was the grandson of Jehoiachin, the former king of Judah, a descendant of David (1 Chronicles 3:17-19; Matthew 1:12).*



Jehozadak was a descendant of Aaron through Eleazar and Zadok. Jehozadak was the high priest during the 586 B.C. deportation to Babylon (1 Chronicles 6:15). This Zadok priestly line continued into the New Testament, as in Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5). The Zadok priestly line is the one that continues into the Millennial Kingdom (Ezekiel 48:11). [Chart from kindlingforcandles.com]

Verse 2, *Thus says the LORD of hosts, “This people says, ‘The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt.’”* This title for God, *Lord of hosts* [twāøaDbVx h¶Dwhðy (*Yahweh Tzeva’ōt*)] is used 14 times in Haggai. *Hosts* has the idea of a large multitude, especially in an army. But also consider that His hosts include the number of stars in the universe and number of atoms in a living cell. The phrase *the Lord of Hosts* introduces the purpose for the book, the people are saying it is not the right time to rebuild God’s temple.

Verses 3-4, *Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?”* The question in verse 4 does not imply they should not be living in houses before the temple is rebuilt, but should they be living in luxury, before the temple is rebuilt? Paneled houses require imported lumber, probably from Lebanon for the purpose of building the temple.

An Application: It is not that we should neglect our families or their wellbeing. Rather, the idea is we should not pursue living in luxury while neglecting to build up the body of Christ, the temple of God today. For example, to *preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction* (2 Timothy 4:2).

Verses 5-7, *Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways! You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes." Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways!"* This paragraph is bracketed by the phrase which literally reads, *twäøaDbVx h¶Dwhöy* (*Yahweh Tzeva'öt*) says, "*Set your heart on your ways.*" In the Bible, "heart" is always a metaphor, and it usually expresses our most basic moral desires. So the exhortation is to think about their basic desires. Then, through Haggai, the Lord tells them the reason they are not prosperous is a judgment of God because they have not completed the temple. Notice this was not a personal subjective judgment but a public national judgment for Israel living under the blessings and curses of the dispensation of the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 28). For example, this was not true, nor was there a command to build a temple, for Noah, Abraham, or Job before the Law or for us after the Law. Today, during this grace/church age, judgment is assigned to the afterlife (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15), but in the age of the Law, judgment was carried out by God on Israel and the nations affecting Israel. So the fact that they were working hard, *but there is not enough to be satisfied* should have indicated to them that God was not pleased.

An Application: Today, we should examine our sin vs. our obedience, not our circumstances, to determine if God is pleased with us. God disciplines us (Hebrews 12:5), but that does not mean we should look to our circumstances to determine God's discipline.

Verse 8, *"Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified," says the LORD.* Whereas the previous paragraph was about what they should have done in the past, this paragraph is about what they should do now, *"go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple."* The reason God gave for the completion of the temple was for Him to be pleased and glorified.

An Application: This is the goal of all creation and all our efforts—to glorify God. In the end, everything will glorify God. Even judgment on sin glorifies God because it is a testimony to the holiness of God.

Verses 12-15, *Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people showed reverence for [literally feared] the LORD. Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke by the commission of the LORD to the people saying, 'I am with you,' declares the LORD. So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the king.* As mentioned in the introduction,

the uniqueness of the prophecy of Haggai is that it is the only prophecy the people completely obeyed. Verse 12 tells us that the people did two things:

1. They *obeyed voice of the LORD their God*, which was the same as *the words of Haggai the prophet, the messenger of the LORD*. Notice, the Word of God came from a prophet of God, not a private experience of an individual Israelite. God always gave His revelation in words, never in mental telepathy.
2. They feared the Lord. The reason for the obedience was a fear of God.

Notice that the encouragement, *“I am with you,” declares the LORD* (here and in 2:4) came because of their obedience and fear of God. The work was done, both because (1) the people obeyed the Word of God, and (2) God *stirred up the spirit of the leaders and the people*. [The date in verse 15, only 23 days after verse 1, refers to the actual resumption of construction.]

An Application: When God changes circumstances, or the motivation of people, there is no need to try to figure out what God is doing. It just happens.

A Personal Observation: It seems (to me) that people are better at building physical structures than they are at building moral character. For example, before a disaster, like a flood or a tornado hits a town, they are hating, divorcing, and suing one another. When the physical disaster hits, they join together to rebuild the town, generously giving time and effort to save one another, serve one another, and to build or rebuild. When the rebuilding is done, they go back to hating, divorcing, and suing one another. The Israelites were constantly complaining and turning to idols. But when Moses asked for contributions to build the tabernacle, he had more goods given than he needed (Exodus 36:3-6). Here in Haggai, we see basically the only time the Israelites obeyed God’s prophet was in building a physical structure. Also, in our age, it is much easier to get people to build buildings and structures than it is to get them to build morally and spiritually in obedience to God’s Word.

Prophecy #2 (2:1-9), October 17, to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and “the remnant of the people” —The Promise of the Future Glory of the Temple

Verses 1-5, *On the twenty-first of the seventh month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet saying ... “take courage, Zerubbabel,” declares the LORD, “take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land take courage,” declares the LORD, “and work; for I am with you,” declares the LORD of hosts. “As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!”* This prophecy comes nearly a month after the building of the temple resumed. The work seemed to be going slow, and this temple seemed *like nothing in comparison* to Solomon’s Temple. But God offers a word of encouragement, He said, *“My Spirit is abiding in your midst,”* and an encouraging command, *“do not fear.”* Interestingly, this is a command to not fear God in the midst of obedience brought about by the people fearing God (1:12). It brings to mind the passage in 1 John 4:18, *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.* Perfect love can only cast out fear, if there is first fear for perfect love to cast out.

Verses 6-9, *For thus says the LORD of hosts, “Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,” says the LORD of*

hosts. “The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,” declares the LORD of hosts. “The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,” says the LORD of hosts, “and in this place I will give peace,” declares the LORD of hosts. Verse 6 seems to be about the time leading up to the Second Coming of Christ (Matthew 24:21-27). Verses 7-9 seem to refer to the millennial reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-10). Four phrases deserve comment:

1. The NASB translation, *they will come with the wealth of all nations* is preferable to the King James *the desire of all nations shall come*. The KJV makes it sound like the Messiah will meet the desires of the nations, where the more likely meaning is that the nations will bring silver and gold to the temple.
2. The phrase, *The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine*, places all the resources of the earth at the hand of God.

An Application: If you have any wealth, it is because God made you a temporary custodian of it, and He will hold you accountable for what you do with it.

3. *The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former* most likely refers, not or not only to the enhancements of Herod on the temple, but the glory of the Millennial Temple described in Ezekiel 40–48.
4. *And in this place I will give peace*, refers only to the Millennial Temple after the Second Coming.

Prophecy #3 (2:10-19), December 18, to Joshua, the High Priest—to Illustrate the Present Blessings of Obedience

Verses 10-14, *On the twenty-fourth of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Haggai the prophet, saying, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, Ask now the priests for a ruling: If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any other food, will it become holy?” And the priests answered, “No.” Then Haggai said, “If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these, will the latter become unclean?” And the priests answered, “It will become unclean.” Then Haggai said, “‘So is this people. And so is this nation before Me,’ declares the LORD, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.’”* The third vision came two months after the second vision. Haggai, on behalf of the Lord, asks the priests two questions about the unclean infecting the clean:

1. Can the clean, clean the unclean? Answer: no.
2. Can the unclean make the clean, unclean? Answer: yes.

For example, if I had two pieces of white cloth and smeared one in the dirt and brought it in contact with the other, the unclean dirty cloth would make the clean cloth dirty, i.e., unclean, but the clean cloth would not clean the soiled cloth. As Ryrie says,

Sanctification or cleanness cannot be transferred, but defilement can (just as health is not contagious, but disease can be). The disobedience of the people was like a dead thing in their midst, contaminating all of them [Ryrie Study Bible].

An Application: What sanctifies people? What makes people holy? Answer: the blood of Christ, the death of Christ on the cross for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19). When we receive Christ as our Savior by faith, we become positionally holy (John 1:12; Ephesians 5:27; Colossians 1:22). But can we pass that holiness along by touching the lives of

others? Answer: no, even charitable work cannot pass positional holiness along to others. We can only tell them about it. As much as we might like, we cannot pass our positional sanctification in Christ along on to our children, grandchildren, parents, or friends. All we can do is point them to Christ, who alone can make them holy (1 Corinthians 5:7; Colossians 1:22). The clean cannot make the unclean clean, the unclean needs to be washed.

Verses 15-17, “*But now, do consider from this day onward...I smote you and every work of your hands with blasting wind, mildew and hail; yet you did not come back to Me,*” declares the LORD. The first phrase of verse 15 literally reads, “*now set your heart from this day forward.*” This phrase is used five times (1:5, 7; 2:15, 18 [twice]). As mentioned in the comment on 1:5, the exhortation is to think about their basic desires. In other words, do not just go back to work on the temple as a rote project but out of the fear of God. What they were to set their heart on was the judgment of God for their sin of omission. The grain harvest had been reduced 50% and the grape harvest for wine, 60%.

Verses 18-19, “*Do consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month; from the day when the temple of the LORD was founded, consider: Is the seed still in the barn? Even including the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree, it has not borne fruit. Yet from this day on I will bless you.*” Obedience to the command to rebuild the temple would result in their empty barns being replenished, not as a miracle but as a blessing of God on their harvest.

Prophecy #4 (2:20-23), also December 18, exclusively for Zerubbabel—A Messianic Prophecy Concerning Zerubbabel

Verses 20-23, *Then the word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying, “Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying, ‘I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, everyone by the sword of another. On that day,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you,’” declares the LORD of hosts.* The final revelation to Haggai came the same day as the previous one. This one is for Zerubbabel, the Persian-appointed governor of Judah and descendant of David, a link between David and Jesus. The message is two-fold:

- The **First** message (verse 22) is a symbolic description of the final battle of the future tribulation period, with the defeat of the antichrist’s government, at the Second Coming of Christ (Zechariah 12:2-9; 14:1-5; Revelation 16:16-18; 19:11-2).
- The **Second** message (verse 23) is about Zerubbabel being chosen of God. Whatever it may mean for Zerubbabel personally, he represented the genealogical line between David and Jesus through Joseph. The *signet ring* metaphor is interesting in that God used it to describe His rejection of the blood line of David through Zerubbabel’s grandfather Coniah (Jeremiah 22:24 & 30; also called Jeconiah in Matthew 1:12, and Jehoiachin in 2 Kings 24:15). Both Zerubbabel, and his grandfather Coniah, are listed in Matthew’s genealogy between David and Joseph (Matthew 1:12). The bloodline from David to Jesus came through the virgin Mary (Luke 3), but His right to reign as a Davidic king came through the Solomon...

Coniah- Shealtiel-Zerubbabel line to *Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah* (Matthew 1:16).

An Application

The purpose of the book is clearly, obviously, and repeatedly made, to rebuild the formerly destroyed temple of God made by Solomon. In the New Testament we are told that the church, the believers in Christ, are His temple: “*Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are*” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; also 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21).

We are to build, or rebuild, the Word of God into the lives of our temple, the believers in Christ, even if they have been torn down because of the consequences of previous sin.