



THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

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INTRODUCTION

Around eighteen years after the Jews returned to their homeland from their Babylonian captivity, God called upon His prophet Haggai to speak to His people. This was some sixty-seventy years after Habakkuk.

At this point, the temple in Jerusalem was in absolute ruins, and the leaders were extremely discouraged because of the horrendous opposition that they faced when they initially returned to the land.

The Samaritans had been developing in the land and didn't want the Jews to re-establish their identity, so as we can imagine, there was some weariness among the leaders of the returned Jews, Ezra / Nehemiah.

When Haggai arrived on the scene, Darius Hystaspes was the king of Persia. King Cyrus had previously ordered a decree to stop the rebuilding of the temple, but Darius was interested in the development of local religious beliefs, so he reversed the decree.

The Jews were special to Cyrus because God had foretold through the prophet Isaiah that this would happen, [Isaiah 44:24-28](#) / [Isaiah 45:1-13](#) / [Ezra 1:1-6](#) / [Jeremiah 25:11-12](#) / [Jeremiah 29:10](#).

Cyrus was shown this prophecy and saw its significance. It was through the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah that God commanded the Jews to rebuild the temple.

DATE

The date of Haggai's writing is generally accepted as being 520 B.C. [Haggai 1:1](#) / [Haggai 2:1](#) / [Haggai 2:10](#) / [Haggai 2:20](#). In 536 B.C., the Jews came back from captivity, and the foundation of the temple was laid. In 539 B.C., the work had stopped because of the Samaritans. Why? Because the Jews referred to themselves as the remnant of God, [Haggai 1:14](#).

In 520 B.C. Haggai is an old man, and his job is to encourage the people to complete the temple. In 516 B.C. the temple was finished. In 458 B.C. Ezra comes back to fix the work within the temple, and in 445 B.C. Nehemiah comes back to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

THE PROPHET HAGGAI

As with most of the prophets, we don't really know a lot about Haggai's personal life; we do know that his name means 'Festival' or 'Festive'. It's possible that he may have been one of the captives taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. He is mentioned in [Ezra 5:1](#) and [Ezra 6:14](#), and his work lasted three months and thirty-one days. He began his ministry about sixteen years after his return.

The foundation of the temple had been laid shortly after the arrival under the leadership of Zerubbabel in 536 B.C., [Ezra 3:8-13](#), but the rebuilding work of the temple was stopped because of opposition from the Samaritans, this opposition lasted sixteen years, [Ezra 4:1-24](#), it was then that God raised up His prophets Haggai and Zechariah, [Ezra 5:1-2](#) / [Ezra 6:14](#).

His message is fairly straightforward, God says 'finish building His temple'.

OUTLINE

Haggai's first prophecy. Haggai 1:2-11

The effect of his message. Haggai 1:12-15

Haggai's second prophecy was delivered a month after the first. Haggai 2:1-9

Haggai's third prophecy was delivered two months and three days after the second. Haggai 2:10-19

Haggai's fourth prophecy was delivered on the same day as the third. Haggai 2:20-23

These discourses are referred to in [Ezra 5:1](#) / [Ezra 6:14](#).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

‘In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest: This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘These people say, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD’s house.’
Haggai 1:1-2

HAGGAI'S FIRST MESSAGE

God spoke to Haggai during the reign of Darius in 520 B.C., [Haggai 1:1](#), and what better time to deliver the message than sitting around a table enjoying some food and fellowship, it came during a Jewish feast, [2 Kings 4:23](#) / [Amos 8:5](#).

This was a perfect time because everyone was together, and so Haggai took full advantage of the occasion to deliver a message to encourage the leaders to start building again.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following concerning the date.

‘When the Israelites returned from exile in Babylon, they continued to follow the Babylonian calendar and began their years in the spring rather than in the fall, [Exodus 23:16](#) / [Exodus 34:22](#). Each new month began with a new moon, and the Israelites commonly celebrated the occasion with a new moon festival, [Numbers 28:11-15](#) / [Isaiah 1:14](#) / [Hosea 2:11](#).’

The word LORD’, [Haggai 1:1](#), is ‘Yahweh’ and it occurs thirty-four times in the thirty-eight verses of Haggai. The message was given to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, who led the first group of exiles back home, [Ezra 1:2](#) / [Ezra 3:8-13](#) / [Ezra 6:14-15](#), and to Joshua, son of Jozadak, the high priest, [Haggai 1:1](#) / [1 Chronicles 6:15](#) / [Ezra 3:2](#) / [Ezra 3:8](#) / [Nehemiah 12:1](#) / [Nehemiah 12:8](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Darius.

‘This was Darius the Great of Persia, also called Darius Hystaspes, after the name of his father. He reigned over the Medo-Persian Empire from 522-486 B.C. He continued the benevolent policies that had characterised the reign of Cyrus, who issued the original order for the rebuilding of the Temple and the return of the Jewish captives to Jerusalem.’

Zerubbabel is called the son of Pedaiah in 1 Chronicles 3:19. Although he was the son of Pedaiah, through a levirate marriage, he was also the legal son of Shealtiel, Deuteronomy 25:5-10. Because his grandfather was King Jehoiachin, he was a descendant of the Davidic kings, Haggai 2:20-23.

Joshua was the first high priest after the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity, Ezra 2:1-2 / Ezra 2:36 / Ezra 2:40 / Ezra 3:2-8. His father was the high priest who was taken into captivity, 1 Chronicles 6:15, and his grandfather, Seraiah, was killed by Nebuchadnezzar when Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. 2 Kings 25:18-21.

For possibly around fifteen years there has been no building and they said it's not a good time to start building, Haggai 1:2. It's easy to understand why the Jews thought it wasn't time to start rebuilding the temple again, they thought the opposition they were getting from the Samaritans, Ezra 4:1-5, was actually a sign from God to say, 'don't build the temple', Jeremiah 25:11-12 / Jeremiah 29:10.

THE TEMPLE

If you've ever studied the Book of Hebrews, you will notice that one word, a word which you would think would be mentioned in the letter, isn't mentioned at all. Do you know what that one word is? It's the word temple. Why is that?

Well, it's not mentioned because God never asked for a temple to be built in the first place, 1 Chronicles 17:1-6. The building of the temple was David's idea, not God's. God says, When have I ever asked for a house to be built? Acts 7:44-50 / Acts 17:24.

God gave Moses instructions on the mountain pertaining to the construction of the tabernacle and its contents, Exodus 25-40, but you won't find anywhere in the Bible where God gave instructions about the construction of the temple.

So why is God emphasising the importance of the temple being built here in Haggai? After all, it's going to be destroyed in A.D. 70. What made the temple so important at this point in time? After all, the proper sacrifices and rituals could be carried out on a makeshift altar.

Could it be that this was more about obedience to the will of God? Could it be that God's reputation was at stake? Could it be that God couldn't be properly honoured so long as the house He called home lay in ruins?

Could it be that the temple symbolised God's presence and Israel's priorities? Could it be that God is so upset and then punished them to get their attention? Proverbs 20:30. God used pain in their lives to get them back on the right track. For this to happen, they needed to demonstrate obedience to God, Psalms 119:67 / Job 36:15.

Wiersbe, in his commentary, says the following.

'Too often we make excuses when we ought to be making confessions and obeying the Lord. We say, 'It's not time for an evangelistic crusade,' 'It's not time for the Spirit to bring revival,' 'It's not time to expand the ministry.' We act as though we fully understand 'the times and the seasons' that God has ordained for His people, but we don't understand them, Acts 1:6-7.'

'Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: 'Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your panelled houses, while this house remains a ruin?' Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much but harvested little. You eat but never have enough. You drink but never have your fill. You put on clothes but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.' Haggai

The word of God came through the prophet Haggai, and He asks, Is it a time for them to be living in their panelled houses, while God's house remains a ruin? Haggai 1:3-4. It appears the people have become very comfortable in the land, and so they're making themselves at home and looking after themselves.

However, they had got to the point where they had either forgotten or totally neglected God's house, and so Haggai needed to remind them about their priorities.

Panelled houses were usually made out of stone and mud, but here the people are just using wood. The wood came from Lebanon, and it was expensive to buy and expensive to transport. It seems they were spending all their money on D.I.Y. whilst God's house was in ruins, Haggai 1:4.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'King Cyrus had provided the Jews with money to buy hardwood timber to rebuild the temple, Ezra 3:7. It appears that the restoration Jews had used this superior wood to build their own homes rather than to rebuild the temple.'

Notice the phrase, 'give careful thought', this is a phrase which appears throughout the book, Haggai 1:5 / Haggai 1:7 / Haggai 2:15 / Haggai 2:18. In Haggai 1:5, God wants them to seriously think about what they are doing and what's happening around them.

They planted much, but harvested little, they eat, but never have enough, they drink, but never have their fill, they put on clothes, but are not warm and they earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it, Haggai 1:6.

They put a lot of effort into their work, but they received little in return. This is a picture of famine and want, which was the result of their neglect. It's possible that there was a famine happening at this time because of their disobedience, Leviticus 26:18-20 / Deuteronomy 17:16 / Deuteronomy 28:20 / Deuteronomy 28:41 / Deuteronomy 32:34 / Jeremiah 44:12 / Jeremiah 42:19.

They were too busy looking after their own physical lives, they neglected their spiritual lives and because of this, God wasn't allowing them to prosper, Matthew 6:25-34.

Jamieson, in his commentary, says the following concerning Haggai 1:6.

'Nothing has prospered with you while you neglected your duty to God.'

'This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honoured,' says the LORD. 'You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?' declares the LORD Almighty. 'Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house. Therefore, because of you, the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the olive oil, and everything else the ground produces, on people and livestock, and on all the labour of your hands.' Haggai 1:7-11

God again says to His people, 'give careful thought to their ways,' Haggai 1:7. In other words, they need to seriously think about this, and if they want to get out of this situation, they need to start the building work on the temple again, and everything will be alright and God would reward them because God will be glorified.

God admonished them to go up to the mountains so that they could get wood for the temple, Haggai 1:8 / Ezra 3:7.

Why the urgency? God had earlier promised that He would have the temple rebuilt, but at the moment this wasn't happening, Isaiah 40-60. God couldn't take pleasure in it and be honoured while it lay incomplete, Haggai 1:8.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following concerning Haggai 1:9.

'There are six occurrences of the phrase 'declares the LORD of hosts' in Haggai, Haggai 1:9 / Haggai 2:4 / Haggai 2:8-9 / Haggai 2:23, (twice) and six occurrences of the shorter phrase 'declares the LORD', Haggai 1:13 / Haggai 2:4, (twice), Haggai 2:14 / Haggai 2:17 / Haggai 2:23. This is unusual for a book as short as Haggai. Obviously, the writer wanted to emphasise the divine origin of his message to the people.'

They expected so much for themselves, [Haggai 1:9](#), but God wasn't allowing it to happen. They looked for much, but what little they did have God blew it away, [Haggai 1:9](#).

Because they were busy building their houses, God's house lay in ruins, [Haggai 1:9](#), and so, God had called for a drought on the land and its fruit, [Haggai 1:10-11](#) / [Leviticus 26:19-20](#) / [Deuteronomy 28:22-24](#), in an effort to get them to listen and finish building what they had neglected to finish, [Matthew 6:33](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Haggai 1:10](#).

'These are most significant words, and they point squarely to the following passage from Genesis: Cursed is the ground FOR THY SAKE! [Genesis 3:17](#). The teaching of the Bible reveals emphatically that providential intervention is continual and a constant possibility in all of the affairs of men. God often called for drought upon Israel, and sent prophets to announce it in advance; nor are such episodes confined to the Old Testament. Agabus prophesied a four-year famine under Claudius Caesar, [Acts 11:28](#). That was in this current dispensation, and the same God who can foretell a great drought can as easily send or withhold it! All such impediments to man's ease and prosperity are intended as guideposts to point him to the Father in heaven. For Adam's sake, [Genesis 3:17](#), For your sake, [Haggai 1:10](#).'

THE EFFECT OF HIS MESSAGE

'Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD. Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: 'I am with you,' declares the LORD. So, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month. In the second year of King Darius.' [Haggai 1:12-15](#)

The people respond to the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua in fearful obedience to God's commands and the message of the prophet Haggai because God had sent him and the people feared the LORD, [Haggai 1:12](#).

Notice the promise from God, He says to them, 'I am with you', [Haggai 1:13](#) / [Genesis 28:15](#) / [Exodus 3:12](#) / [Joshua 1:1-9](#) / [Haggai 2:4](#) / [Matthew 28:19-20](#) / [James 1:5](#). Notice God stirred up the spirits of Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the whole remnant of the people, [Haggai 1:14](#) / [2 Chronicles 36:22-23](#) / [Ezra 1:5](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning this stirring up of the people, [Haggai 1:14](#).

'The words are used of any strong impulse from God to fulfil His will, whether in those who execute His will unknowingly as Pul, [1 Chronicles 5:26](#), to carry off the trans-Jordanic tribes, or the Philistines and Arabians against Jehoram, [2 Chronicles 21:16](#), or the Medes against Babylon, [Jeremiah 51:11](#), or knowingly, as of Cyrus to restore God's people and rebuild the temple, [Ezra 1:1](#), or of the people themselves to return [Ezra 1:5](#).'

Lindsey, in his commentary, says the following concerning the remnant, [Haggai 1:14](#).

'Haggai referred to the people as a remnant, here and also in [Haggai 1:14](#) and in [Haggai 2:2](#), not merely because they were survivors of the Babylonian Exile but also because they were becoming what the remnant of God's people should always be-those who are obedient within their covenant relationship to the Lord, [Isaiah 10:21](#).'

Because the people feared the Lord and had the promise of His presence, the people are happy to get on with the work, [Haggai 1:14](#) / [Haggai 1:1](#) / [Matthew 28:20](#).

Verhoef, in his commentary, says the following concerning the date, [Haggai 1:15](#).

‘Work began again on the twenty-fourth day of that very month. Perhaps it took three weeks for the people to make their decision and make preparations, including cutting wood, [Haggai 1:8](#). There was also a harvest of figs, grapes, and pomegranates in the month of Elul, which may also have delayed them.’

If they work, they will be blessed, but if they don’t, they won’t be. How did Haggai get them back to work? He spoke the word of the Lord, and God stirred the spirits of His people. Haggai’s first message was to stir up the people into action; it was successful.

Remember the original books of the Bible didn’t have chapters like we have today, and so the second part of [Haggai 1:15](#), where it says, ‘in the second year of King Darius,’ is a perfect example of a bad chapter break. This verse belongs in the next chapter.

APPLICATION

Good spiritual leadership is so important, especially when it comes to God’s work within His church, [Hebrews 13:17](#). If God can motivate the leaders to do something, then other people will follow.

If evangelism isn’t important to the leadership, then the chances are, evangelism won’t be important to the congregation. If Bible study isn’t important to the leadership, then studying the Bible won’t be important to the congregation, [Acts 2:42](#). It’s important that leaders lead from the front and set the example for the rest of the church to follow, [John 13:15](#) / [1 Corinthians 11:1](#) / [1 Peter 5:2-3](#).

Through Haggai’s message, Zerubbabel and Joshua managed to encourage the Jews to do two things: obey and fear God, [Haggai 1:14](#). Fear and obedience are topics which are often overlooked these days; they are sometimes seen as old-fashioned and out of date. The truth is, we cannot ignore these topics, as they are central to our being and central to what God wants from everyone, [Ecclesiastes 12:13](#).

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

‘In the second year of King Darius, on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: ‘Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, ‘Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory?’

How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing? But now be strong, Zerubbabel,’ declares the LORD. ‘Be strong, Joshua, son of Jozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,’ declares the LORD, ‘and work. For I am with you,’ declares the LORD Almighty. ‘This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.’ Haggai 1:15-2:1-5

HAGGAI’S SECOND MESSAGE

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Haggai 1:15, belongs at the start of this chapter. Around a month later, Haggai received and delivered his second message to the Jews, Haggai 2:1.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the date, Haggai 2:1.

‘This was the seventh day of the feast of tabernacles, Leviticus 23:34 / Leviticus 23:36 / Leviticus 23:40-42, and its close. The eighth day was to be a sabbath, with its ‘holy convocation,’ but the commemorative feast, the dwelling in booths, in memory of God’s bringing them out of Egypt, was to last seven days.’

Haggai is to speak to Zerubbabel, Joshua and to the remnant of the people, Haggai 2:2. He asks them who of them is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to them now? Does it not seem to them like nothing? Haggai 2:3.

It seems that they have become discouraged in their work in rebuilding the temple, Ezra 3:12. We can imagine them thinking about how awesome Solomon’s temple was in all its grandeur, 1 Kings 6:22 / 1 Kings 6:28 / 1 Kings 6:30 / 1 Kings 6:32 / 1 Kings 6:35 / 1 Kings 7:48-50 / 2 Chronicles 3:4-9, but now here, it is laying in ruins, Haggai 2:3, because the Babylonians totally destroyed it in 586 B.C. 2 Kings 25:8-17.

It’s easy to understand how discouraged they would be when they thought about how the temple once was and what they were about to do. There’s no way they could build a temple like Solomon’s temple, which took seven and a half years to build, but that wasn’t God’s point.

God isn’t interested in the physical structure because the time was coming when the true place of worship was going to be revealed, John 4:20-24 / Acts 17:24, and ultimately, the temple was going to be destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, Matthew 24:1-35.

According to Josephus, Solomon’s temple stood one-hundred and twenty cubits in height, but that of Zerubbabel was only sixty cubits. God was more concerned about His people identifying themselves as His people who lived in the land, and to do that, they needed to get back to following God and obeying His commands.

The Samaritans had discouraged the people, to such an extent that they stopped working on the temple, Ezra 4:17-24, and so, God encourages them to ‘be strong and work’, Haggai 2:4, which were the same words to Solomon from David, 1 Chronicles 28:10 / 1 Chronicles 28:20.

This was God’s way of declaring that He was with them, Haggai 1:13, and the work they should be getting on with, is actually God’s work. God again assures them that He is with them by telling them that the Holy Spirit was among them, Haggai 2:5 / Haggai 1:13 / Exodus 29:45-46.

He will give them the encouragement they need to get on with the building work, just like He was with their ancestors when He delivered them out of Egypt, Haggai 2:5 / Deuteronomy 18:15.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the covenant, Haggai 2:5.

‘The ancient covenant that God made with Abraham, promising to bless ‘all the people of the earth’, Genesis 12:1-3 / Genesis 22:15-18, through his ‘seed’ (singular, which is Christ), Galatians 3:16, will yet be honoured by the Father.’

God is going to be with them in the rebuilding of His temple, Haggai 2:5.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning God’s spirit remaining among them, Haggai 2:5.

‘The Spirit of God is God the Holy Spirit, with His manifold gifts. Where He is is all good. As the soul is in the body, so God the Holy Spirit is in the Church, Himself its life, and bestowing on all each and every good gift, as each and all have need. As Paul says of the Church of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:4 / 1 Corinthians 12:6 / 1 Corinthians 12:11.’

‘This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea, and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD Almighty. ‘The silver is mine, and the gold is mine,’ declares the LORD Almighty. ‘The glory

of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place, I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty.' Haggai 2:6-9

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning 'a little while', [Haggai 2:6](#).

'The 517 years, which were to elapse to the birth of Christ, are called a little time, because to the prophets, ascending in heart to God and the eternity of God, all times, like all things of this world, seem, as they are, only a little thing, yea a mere point, which has neither length nor breadth. So John calls the time of the new law, 'the last hour', [1 John 2:18](#), 'Little children, it is the last hour.' It was little also in respect to the time, which had elapsed from the fall of Adam, upon which God promised the Saviour Christ, [Genesis 3:15](#), little also in respect to the Christian law, which has now lasted above 1,800 years, and the time of the end does not seem yet near.'

Just like when God shook Mount Sinai when He established His covenant with Israel and gave them the law, [Exodus 19:18](#), He would once again shake the heavens and the earth, [Haggai 2:6](#), to establish a new covenant with His people in the future, [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) / [Luke 21:25](#) / [Hebrews 12:27](#).

He will fill this house with glory, [Haggai 2:6](#) / [Exodus 40:34-35](#) / [1 Kings 8:11](#) / [2 Chronicles 5:14](#) / [2 Chronicles 7:1-12](#) / [Ezekiel 43:5](#) / [Ezekiel 44:4](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the glory.

'The glory then was not to be anything which came from man, but directly from God. It was the received expression of God's manifestation of Himself in the tabernacle, [Exodus 40:34-35](#), in Solomon's temple, [1 Kings 8:11](#) / [2 Chronicles 5:14](#) / [2 Chronicles 7:1-12](#), and of the ideal temple, [Ezekiel 43:5](#) / [Ezekiel 44:4](#), which Ezekiel saw, after the likeness of that of Solomon, that 'the glory of the Lord filled the house'.'

All this shaking represents uproar, which would affect all nations until the coming of the Messiah, [Haggai 1:7](#). After this, God is going to reveal Himself to mankind through Jesus, His Son.

It would be Jesus who will ascend to God's right hand and rule over all the nations of this world, [Daniel 2:44](#) / [Daniel 7:13-14](#) / [Philippians 2:5-11](#). God says the silver and gold are His, [Haggai 2:8](#).

Deane, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Haggai 2:8](#).

'All nations with their wealth come (into Christ's kingdom), and the Gentiles shall bring their treasures, their powers, whatever they most prize, to the service of God. All that is here called metaphorically, coming with treasures to the Temple.'

God says, the glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house and in this place He will grant peace, [Haggai 2:9](#) / [Isaiah 9:6-7](#) / [Micah 5:5](#) / [Ephesians 4:3](#).

We must remember that when Haggai prophesied these words, he and the people at the time would have no idea what they meant, [1 Peter 1:10-12](#), and if they understood anything about his words, they would have understood that this was all a part of God's plan, it was all about hope for their future.

They needed to trust God and realise that He was working through the remnant of exiles so that He could lay the foundation for the coming of the Messiah. This was more than just a bunch of stones for a physical building; this was God preparing to build His spiritual house, [1 Corinthians 3:11](#) / [Romans 16:5](#). God determines how it will be, not man.

THE GLORY IN THIS NEW TEMPLE WILL BE GREATER THAN SOLOMON'S

There are three ideas about this.

1. It's going to be when Herod builds parts to it, and so it will resemble Solomon's temple.
2. Jesus Himself would physically walk in Zerubbabel's temple.
3. A prophecy of the Messianic temple, where individually we would be a temple of God, 1 Corinthians 3:16. Whatever it is, it will happen after the earth and heavens are shaken, in which God will change things, the kingdoms, rulers, and powers. The spiritual is always better than the physical, as Christians today, we are now in that kingdom that cannot be shaken, Hebrews 12:25-29. We too have peace in Christ, as Christ is the Prince of peace, Isaiah 9:6 / Ephesians 2:13-18. Haggai's second message teaches us to look past the physical and look forward to the spiritual.

HAGGAI'S THIRD MESSAGE

‘On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Haggai: ‘This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Ask the priests what the law says: If someone carries consecrated meat in the fold of their garment, and that fold touches some bread or stew, some wine, olive oil or other food, does it become consecrated?’ The priests answered, ‘No.’ Then Haggai said, ‘If a person defiled by contact with a dead body touches one of these things, does it become defiled?’ ‘Yes,’ the priests replied, ‘it becomes defiled.’ Then Haggai said, ‘So it is with this people and this nation in my sight,’ declares the LORD. ‘Whatever they do and whatever they offer there is defiled.’ Haggai 2:10-14

It appears that Haggai's words weren't enough for the people to start building the temple again, because he had to speak to them again, two months later, Haggai 2:10 / Haggai 2:1. His third message is presented as a series of two questions.

By asking these questions, God is getting them to see that cleanliness and healthiness are not contagious, but uncleanness and unhealthiness are. All food was ceremonially unclean, Leviticus 23:19-23, and so they are told, it's unclean because there is no temple.

The first question asks the following. If a garment that was being used to carry holy meat, would that in turn make anything it touched holy? Haggai 2:11-12. The obvious answer to this question is no, it wouldn't, Haggai 2:12. The second question is asking if anything is made unclean by touching a dead body, could that defile the thing it touched? Haggai 2:13 / Numbers 19:22. The priests answer by saying that anything which was defiled and unclean touched something else, it would make whatever it touched defiled and unclean, Haggai 2:13.

Gill, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A basic principle is revealed here. The influence of holiness is not as far-reaching as the influence of unholiness. A rotten apple will corrupt a barrel of good apples, but a good apple will not transform a barrel of rotten apples.’

The reason for these questions was simply to show the priests that it was easier to become defiled than it was to become clean. Anything which was ceremonially holy couldn't make anything it touched holy, but anything which was unclean would make the person who touched it unclean, and whoever the person touched would become unclean, Numbers 19:11-22.

The Jews had apparently built an altar, but the problem was that they thought that their past sins would be forgiven if they ceremonially performed offerings on the altar.

God is saying that their lazy attitude towards building the temple had defiled them to the point that God wouldn't accept their sacrifices on the altar, Haggai 2:14. This is part of the reason why they were being punished through famine and drought, Haggai 1:3-6 / Haggai 1:7-11.

Haggai's questions were simple enough for the priests to understand. Can holiness be transferred through casual contact? No. Can defilement be transferred through casual contact? Yes.

God is saying the people are unclean, and what they are offering is unclean. Unclean people can't build a holy temple; therefore, their offering is unclean, [Haggai 2:14](#).

'Now give careful thought to this from this day on—consider how things were before one stone was laid on another in the LORD's temple. When anyone came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. When anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty. I struck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew, and hail, yet you did not return to me,' declares the LORD. 'From this day on, from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, give careful thought to the day when the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid. Give careful thought: Is there yet any seed left in the barn? Until now, the vine and the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree have not borne fruit. 'From this day on, I will bless you.' [Haggai 2:15-19](#)

Once again, God asks His people to give careful thought and consider how things were before one stone was laid on another in God's temple, [Haggai 2:15](#). God asked His people to seriously think about the questions Haggai asked. When anyone came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten and when anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty, [Haggai 2:16](#).

The hardship they were going through was the consequences of their own actions and so, the answers to those questions may be easy for them to answer but changing their ways would be the challenge.

Haggai encourages them to be patient for the blessings that would come as a result of their repentance. Up until now, they've worked hard for nothing, [Haggai 1:6](#) / [Haggai 1:9](#); they've worked hard to please themselves, [Haggai 2:16](#) / [Deuteronomy 28:22](#), but now, since they're going to concentrate on building God's house, they simply needed to be patient for the blessings which would follow.

When they start the building work, God would start to bless them by giving an increase to their crops. This was to be an act of faith, and so, they had to do something first and trust that God would bless them. Just believing wasn't enough; they had to act in faith, [James 2:14-26](#).

Before the stone was laid in the temple, the Jews toiled and scraped to get by. God even brought 'blight, mildew and hail', [Haggai 2:17](#) / [Psalms 78:47](#), to irritate their efforts, but they didn't obey Him, [Haggai 2:17](#).

Once again, they are asked to give careful thought from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, when the foundation of God's temple was laid, [Haggai 2:18](#).

God goes on to ask them to give careful thought about what's happened since the temple's foundations were laid, [Haggai 2:18](#). He asks is there seed in the barn? [Haggai 2:19](#), to which the answer is no, not even has the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree produced any fruit, [Haggai 2:19](#).

God says, 'Be patient, trust Me, I will bless you', [Haggai 2:19](#), and although the promises are material blessings, they will be blessed even more spiritually. He says, This is what I'll give you, but you must stop looking back and start looking forward to the future, [Philippians 3:13](#).

HAGGAI'S FOURTH MESSAGE

'The word of the LORD came to Haggai a second time on the twenty-fourth day of the month: 'Tell Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, that I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother. 'On that day,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'I will take you, my servant, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel,' declares the LORD, 'and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you,' declares the LORD Almighty.' [Haggai 2:20-23](#)

Haggai's fourth and final message on the twenty-fourth day of the month was addressed directly to Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, [Haggai 2:20](#) / [Haggai 1:1](#), who was the grandson of Jehoiachin, [1 Chronicles 3:19](#), and who was a member of the royal family of David, [Haggai 2:2](#) / [Zechariah 4:6-10](#).

God would shake the nations so that He could bring about His purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world, [Haggai 2:21](#). This message is a repetition of the prophecy given earlier in [Haggai 2:6](#).

God is going to overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms, and He will overthrow chariots and their drivers, horses and their riders will fall, each by the sword of his brother, [Haggai 2:22](#). God is going to overthrow the kingdoms of the Gentiles, just like He did before.

He used the Assyrians to punish Israel, [Isaiah 10:5-7](#), He used the Babylonians to punish the Assyrians, [Isaiah 47](#) / [Jeremiah 50-51](#), He used the Medo-Persia to punish the Babylonians, [Isaiah 44:28](#). God used the Greeks to punish the Medo-Persians, [Daniel 8:5](#) / [Daniel 8:20-22](#), and God used the Romans to punish the Greeks, [Daniel 2:40-43](#) / [Daniel 11:2](#).

It was the Assyrians, then the Babylonians, then the Medo-Persians, then the Greeks and then the Romans and all of them would come and go, [Daniel 2:31-45](#) / [Daniel 7:17-23](#), but Jesus would have the right to rule. Jesus was called the Lion of Judah, [Revelation 5:8-10](#) / [Revelation 6:12-17](#), King of Judah. He was the only one who could be king. On that day, God says, He will take His servant Zerubbabel and make him like God's signet ring, [Haggai 2:23](#) / [Genesis 41:42](#) / [Jeremiah 22:24](#) / [Esther 3:10](#) / [Esther 8:2](#), because God has chosen him, [Haggai 2:23](#) / [1 John 4:19](#).

Please note that Zerubbabel is here being used as the type of Jesus, as a King that would eventually come, [1 Timothy 6:15](#) / [Revelation 1:5](#) / [Revelation 17:14](#) / [Revelation 19:11-16](#).

Deane, in his commentary, says the following.

'The true Zerubbabel, i.e., Christ, the son and antitype of Zerubbabel, is the signet in the hand of the Father'.

The signet ring, which symbolised the right to rule, was usually engraved with the sign of the owner and the ring was used as a signature of authority when the engraved sign was pressed on a document. God chose Him as His servant, [Haggai 2:23](#) / [Isaiah 52:13](#) / [Isaiah 53:11](#).'

What's important to understand here is that Zerubbabel was made the leadership symbol of the nation in expectation of the Messiah whom Zerubbabel would symbolise.

Just as Zerubbabel led the exiles when they returned from their Babylonian captivity, [Ezra 2:2](#), so Jesus, our King, would lead and deliver us from the captivity of our sins and give us freedom, [Mark 11:9](#).

Jesus' spiritual kingdom would be established far above all the other kingdoms of this world, [Daniel 2:44](#) / [Daniel 7:13-14](#). It would be Jesus who would sit at God's right hand, [Revelation 1:5](#) / [Revelation 2:26-27](#) / [Revelation 3:21](#) / [Revelation 17:14](#).

It would be Jesus who would rule as King over all things from heaven, [Ephesians 1:20-23](#). It would be Jesus who asks everyone to walk by faith in humble obedience to Him as their King, [Romans 10:17](#). Haggai's fourth and final message is simply saying that the kingdom of God will be restored.

APPLICATION

I always like to ask the question, who encourages the encourager? God always encourages us to keep going and promises to be with us forever, [Matthew 28:20](#). In most congregations, you will always find the faithful few who are always trying their best to reach out to the lost and encourage those who are struggling, but who encourages them?

Who encourages them when they are struggling? Why not go out of your way today to encourage the encourager? Give them a call, visit them, and ask if they need help, [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#) / [Hebrews 3:13](#) / [Hebrews 10:24-25](#). As the Jews discovered, procrastination can be a serious sin; putting things off can be unproductive and unacceptable to God. I would be a rich person if I had received five pounds every time I heard someone say, ‘Yes, I’ll think about becoming a Christian, but not just now, I have things to sort out first!’

What many people don’t understand is that none of us has got the promise of a tomorrow. We take tomorrow for granted and believe we can just put things off to a later date because we’re too busy building our own little empire, [Luke 12:13-21](#). The truth is, that later date may not come, and it’ll be too late for salvation, [James 4:13-15](#).

CONCLUSION

Haggai’s message was simple enough to understand. The Jews needed to finish building God’s temple, but do it in a way which pleases Him and brings Him glory.

To do this, they needed to forget about the past and look to the future, [Philippians 3:13](#). As Christians, God must always be first in our lives, but we must learn the lesson from Haggai’s message, [Romans 15:4](#).

It was going to take more than Zerubbabel and Joshua to build this temple; everyone needed to be involved. If we, as God’s holy temple, [Ephesians 2:19-22](#) / [1 Peter 2:5](#), are to continue to build upon the Lord’s temple today, then everyone needs to be involved in that building work because God has work prepared for us to do, [Ephesians 2:10](#).