

Ezra 5:1-17 (1)

The work of rebuilding the temple had ground to a halt until the second year of the reign of Darius in **520BC (Ezra 4:24)**.

Chapter 5 begins by recording an incident during the reign of Darius.

The time marker, “in the “second year” of Darius (**520 B.C., Ezra 4:24**) suggests that sixteen years had passed since the foundation of the temple was laid (**Ezra 3:8-13**).

The initial enthusiasm had waned, and work on the temple had halted completely.

Summary

In Ezra 5:1-17, God sends His prophets to proclaim His Word in a time of spiritual lethargy and decline to bring about repentance among the people of God.

1. Word Wrought Repentance vv. 1-2

Ezra 5 begins with a summary statement of the contributions of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to the construction of the temple (**Ezra 5:1–2**). It is a clear example of how preaching the Word of God produces repentance among the people of God. These two men conducted very different ministries; one was a straight-talker, the other a visionary. This shows that God uses different men and different ministries even alongside each other to accomplish His sovereign purposes

2. Plain Talking Prophet vs. 1

Haggai ministry spanned a brief four month period from Aug to Dec, 520 BC.

Facing constant opposition and discouragement, God’s people had been unwilling to build. Haggai was a plain speaking man: **Hag. 1:4** “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?”

The prophet also challenged their complaining spirit.

Nothing satisfied. There was always a sense of emptiness and need.

If God is not your priority, nothing will ultimately satisfy.

The people immediately obeyed, turning away from the past and focusing with renewed zeal and earnestness on the work at hand. God was with them in a new way, and there seemed to be a restored unity among them.

In his next sermon, the people had experienced further opposition and discouragement, and Haggai was there to urge them on to be strong and fearless and to continue to work (**Hag. 2:4-5**) ending the sermon with a vision of the latter-day glory that lay ahead of them (**Hag. 2:6–9**)

Haggai called the Lord’s people to work with the motivation of what lay ahead though it was yet unseen (cf Paul **2 Cor. 4:18**).

Two months later, Haggai asked a series of penetrating questions (**Hag 2:13–14**).

Haggai's ministry is very relevant. We also struggle with commitment and reality in the worship and service of God. We are far too easily content with outward forms and betray a worldliness suggesting that our religion is, at best, formal and secondary.

3. Visionary Prophet vs. 1

Zechariah ministered in the same period of history, though it was spread over two years rather than four months (520–518 BC). His ministry was different from Haggai's in the manner in which he prophesied, employing an apocalyptic style. The first half of Zechariah's prophecy contains a series of eight "night visions." The second half of the book is largely a glimpse of the future glory of the new heavens and the new earth. Zechariah's first prophetic word is very significant (**Zech. 1:3**). His message is a call to repentance (**Zech. 1:14–16**).

There is a great contrast between these two prophets. Haggai is man of action, exhorting the people to begin and continue to work. Zechariah is more of a visionary, stepping back from the immediate present particular context to view the larger picture. He, too, was eager for them to engage in what was evidently their duty, but he was also eager to point out what lay at the very heart of institutions such as the temple; Jesus Christ (**Zech. 9:9; 11:12–13; 12:10**).

At the heart of Zechariah's message is a focus on the coming Redeemer-Shepherd (**Zech 13:7; Mark 14:27–28**). Zechariah is attempting to get the Lord's people in his time to catch a glimpse of the greater plan and purpose for which the temple is but a sign. The temple was important because it pointed to Jesus Christ.

Zechariah promises the people that at some future time, a fountain would be opened that would take away their sin and guilt (**Zech. 13:1**).

The fountain that was to be opened was not the neck of a sacrificial animal, but the pierced side of the Son of God at Calvary (**Zech. 3:8–9; Heb. 9:24–26**).

All of that is in the future. For now, the people of God must honor the present; one in which a type and shadow of that which is to come is to be visually represented before their eyes through the temple and its administrations. It is time to repent of their slovenly ways and selfish attitudes. It is time to focus on the temple.

4. Obedient Response vs. 2

The preaching of the Word of the Lord through Haggai and Zechariah had a profound effect on Zerubbabel and Jeshua, who "arose and began to rebuild" the temple (**5:2**). That is what the Word of God does. It challenges, motivates, and energizes us to perform acts of obedience (cf. **1 Thess. 2:13**).

Is it at work within you?