

Haggai 1

1 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: **2** “Thus says the Lord of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.” **3** Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, **4** “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?⁵ Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. **6** You have sown much and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

7 “Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. **8** Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord. **9** You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. **10** Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. **11** And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.”

The People Obey the Lord

12 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 feared the Lord. **13** Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message, “I am with you, declares the Lord.” **14** And 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, **15** on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

As we read the ancient prophets of Israel in the Old Testament we see that often their ministry was to repent of their sins of spiritual adultery – that is, of forsaking Yahweh and holding fast to the gods of the pagan nations around them. And often we learn, they ignored the prophets calls for repentance.

Ultimately, their refusal to return to devotion to Yahweh resulted in their defeat by their enemies, including the fierce Babylonians, who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 and carried of the people into exile in Babylon.

But in this book of Haggai, which was written after the people, or at least some of them, returned to their native Palestine after 70 years of captivity in Babylon – in this book we

see that they heeded the prophet and his message that was sent to them by Yahweh God. So in that sense it is a refreshing prophetic book to read.

Let me set the historical stage for us of these events. The Persian King Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. Three years later he issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland rebuild their temple. We can read about this in Ezra 1:2-4.

However, many of the Jews living in Babylon decided they liked life there and had not interest in returning. But about 50,000 people very much wanted to return and they did. Those who returned were call “the remnant.” In the scriptures the word “remnant” often refers to the group of people within the Jewish nation who were truly dedicated to Yahweh and to his worship and service. They were a holy people, separated by their devotion to God.

And they were of particular importance because it was through them that the Messiah would be born. Had the remnant been wiped off the face of the earth, the Messiah, the descent of David could not have taken place.

The Jewish people, the remnant, that is, returned to the land and as they began to rebuild the temple some of the neighboring peoples opposed them, so they stopped for several years. And in the meantime they became occupied with other affairs of their lives. Then in 520 B.C. God sent the prophet Haggai to bring God’s Word to them.

The name “Haggai” means “my festival.” Some think he may have been born during one of the great Jewish festivals, or it could refer to the time of rejoicing and feasting that came about when the people returned to the LORD.

Today we will just be studying chapter 1 of Haggai. I think these 15 verses can be examined in three sections with three major ideas:

Yahweh knows exactly what his people’s problems are.

Yahweh commands the people to take corrective action.

Yahweh enables his people to obey him.

Thus in this book we see that Yahweh reveals himself as the omniscient holy God who knows well his people’s sinful fragility and knows exactly what they must do to get themselves out of their precarious situation. Yet they are not alone to struggle and fight against their sin on their own; he promises to be with them. See v. 13:

“I am with you, declares the LORD.”

1-6 – Yahweh knows exactly what his people’s problems are.

- A. First, I want us to notice the means that God used to speak to his people. He sent to them a fellow Hebrew, a prophet named Haggai. The scripture says in v. 1

“...the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to ^(B)Zerubbabel the son of ^(C)Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to ^(D)Joshua the son of ^(E)Jehozadak, the high priest:

The “word of the LORD came to them not by an angel but by “the hand of Haggai the prophet.” In those days, hundreds of years before Christ, God spoke to his people through men whom he had anointed with the Holy Spirit to speak his message to the people. We read in the NT in Hebrews 1:1:

Long ago, at many times and ^(A)in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. At that time in the history of redemption, this was a chief way in which God communicated his will and nature to his people.

Notice here in v. 1 that the prophet’s message was directed specifically to two men, the king named Zerubbabel, who was the governor of Judah, and to Joshua, son of Jehozadak, who was the high priest.

Through the word that the LORD sent through Haggai we see that the LORD knew exactly what the people’s problems were.

First of all, Yahweh knew what they were saying. Look at verse 2:

“These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.”

How did the LORD know what they were saying? Isn’t he in heaven and they were on earth? Yes, of course, but God is not only omniscient – knowing everything, but he is omnipresent – hearing everything. Psalm 139:4 says:

Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, ^(D)you know it altogether.

But Yahweh also knew what they were doing. Look at verse 4:

“Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while ^(H)this house lies in ruins?

What had they been doing? They had been building their own houses, and they weren’t just shacks, but had wood paneling in them – no doubt beautiful and probably costly.

Yahweh also knew what else they were doing. In verse 6 we see that they had been working hard farming, but hadn’t harvested much. I know a little how they felt: I planted 4 tomato plants this year but have only gotten one tomato.

And the text in verse 6 goes on to talk about the fact that they ate, but were never filled – always hungry. And they could never get enough to drink. They were always hungry and thirsty. And they had clothes but they were inadequate to keep them warm. And it seemed when they worked hard to earn money, they put it in a bag for safe-keeping and it all fell out through holes in the bag and was lost. They worked and worked but never had anything to show for it.

God knows his people intimately. He even knew what they were thinking: At the end of verse 5 he says, “Consider your ways.” In other words, he is telling them to think about their situation. How did they get into this fix? In other words, God is saying, “Take stock of yourselves. What caused you to have all these problems? Is there something you can do to get yourself out of these hard situations?”

II. v. 7-11 – Yahweh commands the people to take corrective action

Yahweh exhorts them to think: “consider your ways” What are you doing wrong? What can you do right?

Yahweh commands them to corrective action. See v. 8

⁸ Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord.

So here’s the situation: Yahweh tells his people: You have become absorbed in building you own houses, of making yourselves comfortable, and living in an attractive home – but it has been at great expense – the expense of causing my house to remain unbuilt, unfinished. You’ve been looting for yourselves and your families but you have forgotten about the most important house – the house, the temple of Yahweh.

If there is no temple there is no place to sacrifice animals to cover your sins, there is no place to put the ark of the covenant or the show bread or the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, there is no courtyard for the worshippers. All these vital acts of worship ordained by God cannot happen until the temple is rebuilt. Care you not for the worship of your God? Are you so pious and holy that you have no sins that need to be dealt with? Are you so ungrateful to your Creator and Sustainer that you have no desire to bring him offerings at the temple?

Yet my people, none of these things seem to bother you. Has the building of your own houses taken the priority over everything else in your life, even over divine worship within the confines of the sacred temple in Jerusalem. Have you become spiritually dull and consumed with materialism?

“Consider your ways,” Yahweh says in verse 7. This is why you are having such hardship in your lives, because divine worship in my temple has become a forgotten thing in your lives.

Are you not ashamed of your callousness to my worship? Hasten, oh hasten my people. Delay not. Get you up into the mountains. You’re your axes and tools and fell trees to

make lumber for the construction of my temple. "...that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord. (v. 8)

You see, the temple was not just any building but God's special presence on earth dwelt there. It was there in the holy of holies that the high priest entered once a year to offer the blood of a bull and goat to cover his sins and the sins of the people.

So when the original temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 those who survived were emotionally and psychologically devastated. Their whole religion and culture were upended.

Now the pagan king Darius had given them the opportunity to rebuild the temple but they had put this aside to concentrate on building their own houses.

Their priorities were totally misplaced. My self, and my family and my house had become more important than the temple of our God where he is to be worshipped, where sacrifices for sin were to be made.

Oh, how shortsighted the people had become. Their priority in life had become to build up their own little kingdom to the neglect of God's kingdom. Their personal needs and personal wants had pushed aside God's wants and God's will and God's glory.

God sent Haggai to confront them with this situation and the way to fix it: "Go up to the hills and bring wood..." Put feet to your repentance. Put out sweat and labor and hard work and endurance. Get your priorities straight, says the LORD. My house where my worship takes place his more important, has a higher priority than your own paneled houses.

III. v.12-15 – Yahweh enables his people to obey him Now we see the refreshing thing

The king, high priest, and people obeyed the Word of the LORD through Haggai.
V. 12

The people feared Yahweh v. 12

The LORD's presence was with them v. 13

The LORD stirred up the people to get to work v. 14

Matt. 6:33

³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For ^(C)the Gentiles seek after all these things, and ^(D)your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But ^(E)seek first ^(F)the kingdom of God and his righteousness, ^(G)and all these things will be added to you.

Matt. 13:44-46

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven ^(D)is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy ^(E)he goes and sells all that he has and ^(E)buys that field.

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Value

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,⁴⁶ who, on finding ^(G)one pearl of great value, ^(H)went and sold all that he had and ^(I)bought it.

Extra-Biblical examples of people who put their own kingdoms ahead of God’s priorities and concerns

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Lillias Trotter

Sum’y:

You’ve neglected the LORD’s house because of your preoccupation with building your own houses. This is why you are suffering such hardship and losses.

Applications: _____

1. Don’t neglect the kingdom of God by getting sidetracked in your own private agendas and pursuits.

Examples of problems from inverted priorities:

1 Cor. 11:29-30 - ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some ^(AE)have died.

Heb. 12:5-11 - ^(J)“My son, ^(K)do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

⁶ For ^(L)the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. ^(M)God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, ^(N)in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we

not much more be subject to (Q)the Father of spirits (P)and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, (Q)that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ (R)For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields (S)the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Rev. 3:15-16 , 19

¹⁵ “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. (AN)Would that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. ... ¹⁹ (AU)Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

Examples of priorities wrong:

Investing money and not giving to the church.

Giving all quality time to one’s family and little or none to the church fellowship.

Planning one’s retirement years for pleasure and security without asking, “How can I use this time for the furtherance of kingdom of God?”

Devotion of much time, energy and money to my children’s development and no spiritual or Biblical guidance or instruction given them in the home .

Devotion of much time, effort and study in the improvement of my employability skills but little time spent in developing my knowledge of Bible, of theology.

I might note that in the NT church, every member is a member of this holy remnant and is marked by having received a spiritual birth and is living a life of true devotion and service to Christ. Not a perfect believer, but a sincere and devoted believer who deeply loves Christ and is devoted to him and to his church and his kingdom in the world. If you are a born-again believer you are a called man or woman, called to give up your own private life and lay your life down at the feet of Jesus Christ to be used according to his purpose for his glory in the world. Oh, blessed calling – to be called by Jesus to be his disciple, his learner, his disciple. His purpose for our lives is greater than our own short-sighted and selfish purposes. As Paul said, “I count all things in this world as gladly given up losses for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

If you indeed belong to Christ, you have a high calling in life. You are to serve and glorify Jesus Christ above everything else in life.

Acts 20:24 - ²⁴ But (AK)I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only (AL)I may finish my course and (AM)the ministry (AN)that I received from the Lord Jesus, (AO)to testify to (AP)the gospel of (AQ)the grace of God. ²

Phil. 3:13-14 - But one thing I do: (A)forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for (B)the prize of the upward (C)call of God in Christ Jesus.

Heb. 10:7 - Then I said, 'Behold, **I have come to do your will**, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'

Boice's summary of v 7-11: "What is the cause of this? It is the work of God. God has sent emptiness so that his people might awake from their idolatry and turn back to him."
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"What is the solution? It is.... Obedience! It is getting on with what God has give us to do. In this case -get up into the mountains and cut down timber for the Lord's house!

For us, how can we apply this? It is to put God's priorities, God's interests, God's kingdom first. If we need to, to get re-focused on God's kingdom. "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Your will be done in my life as it is in heaven."

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