



Haggai: God of Peace

Memory Verse: Haggai 2:9 “ ‘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.**”

Background

Haggai is the 37th book of the Bible and the 10th book of the minor prophets in the Old Testament. Haggai's name comes from the Hebrew word for “festival” or “festive” perhaps because he had been born on the day of a major feast in the Jewish calendar. Haggai is one of three prophets (along with Zechariah and Malachi) that preached during the post-exilic years after the Jews had returned to Jerusalem following their Babylonian captivity. In 539 BC, Cyrus of Persia overthrew the Babylonians and the next year issued a decree that the Jews should return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple of God. Zerubbabel led this first group of 50,000 Jews (one of which was Haggai) back to Jerusalem. The rebuilding of the Temple began in 536 BC, but due to internal and external opposition, the rebuilding was brought to a halt in 534 BC. Fourteen years later in 520 BC, “In the second year of King Darius” (1:1), Haggai delivers four messages to encourage the people to finish building the Temple.

The Short Story

Putting God first and rebuilding His Temple will bring blessings.

What's the Big Idea?

The Jews had returned to their homeland following their captivity only to face opposition in rebuilding the Temple of the Lord. Their enemies harassed them so much that work on the Temple ceased for fourteen years (Ezra 4). Discouraged, the Jews lost interest in rebuilding and became spiritually apathetic, focusing on their own interests instead. They had spent time beautifying their own houses while neglecting the Temple of the Lord. Into this spiritual indifference, Haggai speaks to the people. “Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: ‘Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?’ ” (1:3-4). They did not realize that failing to put God first had caused them to miss out on God's blessings and that their misplaced priorities were the cause of their economic hardships. “ ‘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.’ ” (1:9-10). The people are told to “give careful thought to their ways” (1:5), and they do. They respond immediately to Haggai's message and the rebuilding of the Temple begins within 23 days. As they physically begin rebuilding the Temple, the people also experience a shift in their spiritual lives, moving from a place of self-interest to devotion to God.

So What? Why is this book so important? What was God's purpose for the book?

As the rebuilding of the Temple begins again, Haggai preaches messages of encouragement and hope to the people of Judah. Haggai calls the people to renewed holiness and faith in God. By putting God first and being obedient to Him in building the temple, Haggai shares that from now on they will be blessed by God (2:19). Haggai also prophesies about the future glory of God's House, a day when the glory of Solomon's Temple would pale in comparison. “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 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.” (2:6-9). While this prophecy has many layers to it, one thing is sure. Just as the people of Haggai's time had hope in a future filled with the peace and glory of the Lord, we have that same hope. God's Word is true and a time will come when those in Christ will experience what John described in Revelation 21:22-23, “I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.” As we wait in eager anticipation for that day, may we always honor God first in our lives.

**Material taken from various sources.*

Teaching Text

“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.’⁷ 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.⁸ ‘The silver is mine and the gold is mine,’ declares the LORD Almighty.⁹ ‘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

Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

- Read Haggai 2:4: Why does he repeat the phrase “**Be strong**” so often? What does he mean by it?
- What does the description “**The Lord Almighty**” mean? How are we to make it a part of our view of God?
- What kind of “shaking” can we expect from God? What does this say about His control over the world?
- What is the one thing that most reasonable people want in their life and society? Can God provide it?
- Why would God say the “silver and gold” is His? How are we to interpret this in Kingdom expansion?
- Why is peace such an important commodity? How do we receive and operate in peace?

Practical Application

- Where do you need to “be strong” in your faith and spiritual life? Where are you challenged most in life?
- What is the true yearning of your heart? If you had only one wish, what would it be?
- Where do you need to change your perspective on the past? Where do you need to be future oriented?
- Do you possess confidence in God’s desire and ability to make your future better? Why or why not?
- In what area of your life do you need to press into the peace of Christ? How hard is it to do so?

Hitting the Highpoints

- 1:4-5 “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?”
- 1:13-14 “So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah ...”
- 2:4 “But now be strong, Zerubbabel,’ declares the Lord. ... ‘For I am with you,’ declares the Lord Almighty.”
- 2:19 “Is there yet any seed left in the barn? ...From this day on I will bless you.”
- 2:22 “I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of the foreign kingdoms. “

Bonus Features

“The prophet Haggai released one of the most important directions for us. In the first chapter of his book, he speaks predominantly on the importance of rightly building the House of the Lord. We know that Jesus is the Master Builder of God’s House and His Body – the Church, so we can definitely see Him here as The Builder of God’s House. The prophet is explaining why most Christians do not experience a breakthrough and why they always seem to strive hard to be prosperous, but end up broke. That’s because the House of the Lord is not their number one priority, as it should be. Jesus told His disciples the same thing when He told them to seek first the Kingdom of God and THEN all else will be given them as well (Matt 6:33).” *Excerpted from The Life Of Jesus (life-of-jesus.org/Haggai)*

Personal Takeaways and Notes