

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 11/12/08 Wednesday evening

Old Testament Survey—Haggai

It never ceases to amaze me at how timely it is to read the messages of the prophets of Israel. We may be removed by 2500+ years and we may be living in a different country and culture, but we are facing many of the issues they addressed in their messages to their people.

This is certainly the case when we come to the message of the prophet Haggai. Haggai confronted the sin of procrastination. He challenged his people for their mixed up priorities that promoted selfish interests and ignored God's interests. They had money and time to remodel their own homes, Haggai pointed out, but didn't seem to have money and time for the work in God's house. How can that be? Yes, Haggai has a timely message for us.

Discuss: What stands out to you from the book of Haggai?

Who wrote the book?

--Haggai (means "festal" or "festive" which may indicate that he was born during one of the three Jewish feasts: Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Tabernacles).

--A contemporary of Zechariah (both of them were influential in promoting the rebuilding of the temple)

See: Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14

When was the book written?

--520 B.C.

The Setting: (see NIV Study Bible Intro)

See: 1:1

--The 70 year captivity is over. In 538, Cyrus king of Persia, the leader who defeated the Babylonians, issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple (see Ezra 1:2-4). Led by Zerubbabel, about 50,000 Jews journeyed home and began work on the temple. Within two years they completed the foundation. However, due to opposition by the Samaritans and others, the project came to a halt and lie dormant for 16 years.

--In 520, Haggai and Zechariah began to preach. They called for the Jews to get busy doing what God had commanded them to do--rebuild the temple. King Darius the Great of Persia (who became king in 522) supported the Jewish effort.

--In 516, the temple was finished and dedicated (Ezra 6:15-18).

Summary:

--Haggai ministered *after* the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity. There was a remnant back in the land (1:12, 14).

--Haggai ministered during the reign of Darius, while Zerubbabel was governor of Judah, and Joshua was High Priest.

--It's the shortest book in the OT (next to Obadiah).

Why was the book written?

Haggai confronted the problem of wrong priorities. How so? His people were making wrong decisions on the use of their money and time that reflected their priorities. They were taking care of their homes, but neglecting God's Temple. Because of their wrong priorities, the people were experiencing hard times (see 1:5-6, 9-11).

Overview: The Message of Haggai (see Craigie?)

Haggai encourages the people by letting them know that the three things that had been missing from God's people during the 70 year captivity would be reestablished, once they got their priorities right...

1. God's glorious presence (1:1-2:9)
2. The Holiness of the people (2:10-19)
3. God's Anointed leader (2:20-23)

These three characteristics had been missing from the Jews during the captivity, but Haggai announced would return.

Note: God still emphasizes the importance of these three essentials: God's presence, Man's holiness, a Leader. But this side of the Cross, we experience the fullness of these essentials.

<i>Essential</i>	<i>In Haggai's Day</i>	<i>In Our Day</i>
God's Presence	Temple (building)	Church (people)
Man's Holiness	Ceremonial Cleanness	Positional Cleanness
Leader	King (Zerubbabel)	Messiah (Jesus)

What is the outline of the book?

Haggai delivers four messages from God...

- I. Message #1: Rebuild the temple (ch 1).
- II. Message #2: God's glory will fill the temple (2:1-9).
 - A. Don't live in the past.
 - B. The glory of the present temple will outshine the former house.
- III. Message #3: There are consequences to unholiness (2:10-19).
- IV. Message #4: God will finally triumph (2:20-23).

What is the message of the book in one sentence?

Haggai exhorts us to put God first in our priorities.

What contribution does the book make to biblical theology (that is, how does this book relate to the rest of the Bible)?

- 1. *We learn about the importance of priorities.*

Let's walk through the book.

Q: What were the people saying when Haggai began his ministry? 1:2 It's not time...

Q: What did God say about their assessment? 1:3-4 Oh really?!

What inconsistency did God see? The people had time to fix up their houses, but didn't have time to make necessary repairs to God's House.

Q: In verses 5-6, God challenged the people to see a vital connection. What had been happening to the people? Hard times! Bad crops. Not enough money to make it from paycheck to paycheck, "You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."

What was the cause of the hard times? Their wrong priorities.

Q: What counsel did God give them? 1:8 Go get wood and start building the temple!

Q: How did the people respond to this message? 1:12

--They obeyed! But it was not mere formal obedience...

--The people feared the Lord.

Q: What happened as the result of their obedience?

--In 1:13--God said, "I'm with you." (also in 2:4)

Q: Who ultimately was responsible for this change of priorities? 1:14 "The Lord stirred"

Discuss: What does this account teach us about our priorities? There are consequences for not putting God first. There are blessings for putting Him first! God will not play second fiddle in our lives. Gleason Archer states (430), "If God's people will put first His program, His house, and His worship, then their present poverty and failure will give way to a blessed prosperity commensurate with their covenant faithfulness."

What are some ways we are guilty of the same sin that Haggai confronted here?

2. *We learn about the significance of the Temple.*

The significance of the temple is that the "glory of God" is related to it. Haggai calls it the "Lord's temple" in 2:15, 18.

Q: What does God call the temple? See 1:2, 4, 8, 9, 14; 2:3, 9 "My house"; What's the significance of this metaphor? By calling the temple "the house of God," what is signified? What's a house for? It's where we live, where we feel comfortable, the place we identify with. It has family connotations. So the House of God.

Discuss: In the OT, God called a building His "house." In the NT, is the Church the "house of God"? It depends what you mean by "church"! If you use it as the Bible does, yes (see 1 Peter 2:4-5). The church is people, God's people.

Is it accurate to refer to a church building as God's temple or God's house? (see Stephen's sermon in Acts 7:48-50) What pitfalls do we get into if we think of and refer to a church building as the "house of God"? It contributes to the sacred/secular dichotomy, to the mentality that if I'm going to make a "spiritual" decision, I must make it in the front of a "church."

Other NT texts which develop the "temple" theme: 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19

Key Thought: In our day, God's presence is not limited to a building, but to a Person! If you are "in Christ," God lives in you!

Discuss: What difference should this make in the way we live our lives?

3. *We learn about the importance of purity.*

Q: What question did God ask the priests in 2:11-12?

Q: What followup question did Haggai ask in 2:13?

Q: What was the problem Haggai was getting at? 2:14 Defilement

Q: What had God done to try to get His people's attention? 2:17 Sent hail, etc.

Discuss: What's the point of this exchange? God requires p

