

Chapter XXIII—Questions

Preface to Haggai

1. What was the purpose of Haggai's prophecy?
2. Trace the three incidents from 605 B.C. to 586 B.C. in which increasing numbers of Jews were led to Babylon.
3. _____ had predicted that the Babylonian captivity would last seventy years.
4. _____ had predicted the coming of Cyrus who issued the decree which ended the Babylonian captivity.
5. How do you account for Cyrus' return to the Jews of the sacred vessels from the temple?
6. What moved Cyrus to allow the Jews to return to their homeland?
7. Most of the Jews did or did not return to Palestine? Why?
8. What was the first act of the remnant upon returning?
9. What was Samaria's reaction to the return of the Jews? Trace the consequences of the Jew's response.
10. What three prophets encouraged the Jews to rebuild the temple?
11. In addition to the Book of Haggai the prophet is credited with what other writing?
12. The burden of Haggai is _____.
13. How do you account for the Jews' indifference to the task of re-building the temple?
14. Why was this reconstruction critical?

CHAPTER XXIV

EXPOSITION OF HAGGAI

THE FIRST MESSAGE . . . Haggai 1:1-15

RV . . . In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehoozadak, the high priest, saying, Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, This people say, It is not the time for us to come, the time for Jehovah's house to be built. Then came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, while this house lieth waste? Now

therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith Jehovah. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith Jehovah of hosts. Because of my house that lieth waste, while ye run every man to his own house. Therefore for your sake the heavens withhold the dew, and the earth withholdeth its fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the grain, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands. 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 Jehovah their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as Jehovah their God had sent him; and the people did fear before Jehovah. Then spake Haggai Jehovah's messenger in Jehovah's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith Jehovah. And Jehovah 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 did work on the house of Jehovah of hosts, their God, in the four and twentieth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

LXX . . . 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 the prophet Aggaeus, saying, Speak to Zorobabel the son of Salathiel, of the tribe of Juda, and to Jesus the son of Josedec, the high priest, saying, Thus saith the Lord Almighty, saying, This people say, The time is not come to build the house of the Lord. And the word of the Lord came by the hand of the prophet Aggaeus, saying, Is it time for you to dwell in your ceiled houses, whereas our house is desolate? And now thus saith the Lord Almighty; Consider your ways, I pray you. Ye have sown much, but brought in little; ye have eaten, and are not satisfied; ye have drunk, and are not satisfied with drink, ye have clothed yourselves, and have not become warm thereby; and he that earns wages has gathered them into a bag of holes. Thus saith the Lord Almighty; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and cut timber;

build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and be glorified, saith the Lord. Ye looked for much, and there came little; and it was brought into the house, and I blew it away. Therefore thus saith the Lord Almighty, Because my house is desolate, and ye run every one into his own house; therefore shall the sky withhold dew, and the earth shall keep back her produce. And I will bring a sword upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the wine, and upon the oil, and all that the earth produces, and upon the men, and upon the cattle, and upon all the labours of their hands. And Zorobabel the son of Salathiel, of the tribe of Juda, and Jesus the son of Josedec, the high priest, and all the remnant of the people hearkened to the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of the prophet Aggaeus, according as the Lord their God had sent him to them, and the people feared before the Lord. And Aggaeus the Lord's messenger spoke among the messengers of the Lord to the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zorobabel the son Salathiel, of the tribe of Judah, and the spirit of Jesus the son of Josedec, the high priest, and the spirit of the remnant of all the people; and they went in, and wrought in the house of the Lord Almighty their God, on the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

COMMENTS

The first message of Haggai to the indifferent and discouraged remnant merits special examination for the simple reason that it got results! Those whose concern is for the building of the spiritual temple of God, the church, will do well to learn from this prophet of action. (cp. *Ephesians* 2:19-22)

THE WORD OF JEHOVAH CAME . . . v. 1

It was exactly twenty-three days from the time Jehovah delivered the message through Haggai until they began to work. That kind of response to a sermon today would leave most preachers speechless!

Darius had assumed the Persian throne by assassinating his predecessor in 521 B.C. Even with his approval, there was no movement to resume building the temple. So God spoke to Haggai (and to Zechariah and Malachi) with a message for the people, beginning with the civil and religious leaders, Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest.

The name Zerubbabel means "born in Babylon" . . . no special significance. He was the son of Shealtiel, according to Haggai.

This presents a problem. In Chronicles Zerubbabel is called the son of Pedaiah, brother of Shealtiel and grandson of Assir. (*I Chronicles* 3:17-19) In Luke's genealogy Zerubbabel is the son Shealtiel and the grandson of Neri. (*Luke* 3:27)

Zedekiah, son of King Jeconiah had no children. Assir, another son of Jeconiah (cf. *Jeremiah* 22:30) had a daughter, but no son. (*I Chronicles* 3:16) Legally, Assir's daughter was heir to the throne, and so must marry a man from her father's tribe. (*Numbers* 27:8, 36:8,9)

She married Neri, of the Davidic line through Nathan's branch. Luke makes no mention of Assir who descended from David through Solomon, but traces the lineage rather through Nathan of whom Zerubbabel was the grandson. This fulfills the prediction of *Jeremiah* 22:30.

Neri and Assir's daughter produced a son named Shealtiel and others as mentioned in *I Chronicles* 3:18. Shealtiel had no children, so, according to law, his brother, Pedaiah must marry his widow to produce an heir for Shealtiel. (cp. *Deuteronomy* 25:5-10)

Zerubbabel was the son of this Levirate marriage. Legally Shealtiel was Assir's son and Jeconiah's grandson. Actually he was the son of Neri. Zerubbabel was legally the son of Shealtiel, but actually was Pedaiah's son. See the diagram below.

Jeconiah

Assir

Zedekiah
(no child)

Daughter & Neri

Shealtiel, Pedaiah
(no child)

Legal Actual

Zerubbabel

Since Joshua the high priest and his father, Jehozadek, are not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible excepting for Haggai's contemporary,

Zechariah, we do not know anything about them other than Joshua's influential responsibility as spiritual leader during the rebuilding of the temple.

IS IT TIME . . . v. 2-4

The message is not Haggai's but God's. The claim to inspiration is unmistakable.

It is addressed to those who are responsible for the attitudes and actions (or inaction) of the people. (v.1) The civil and spiritual leaders are responsible for the spiritual and moral fibre of any nation. As water rises no higher than its source, a nation is no stronger than its leaders.

THIS PEOPLE . . . NOT "MY PEOPLE" . . .

The terminology seems designed to express dissatisfaction with the remnant God does not disclaim them, but He is stern. He will not tolerate the kind of attitudes which brought about the captivity from which they were so recently returned.

The message immediately attacks the excuses being made for not building the house of God. "*It is not time.*" There has not been sufficient time since our return from exile. We have built an altar as our first act upon return. It is enough until we get "settled in." Seventy years have not lapsed, as Jeremiah predicted, since the destruction of the first temple. Two more years are needed, then we will build. With so much uncertainty in the international situation effecting the national economy, it is a poor time to build.

If you've ever been on a fund drive for a church building, you've heard all this! Our own needs are not met, we have a place of worship, the Bible doesn't allow for church buildings, there may be another war or an economic recession, etc.

What it all amounts to, whether in Haggai's day or our own is simply that God's people are more concerned with their own interests than with providing an adequate house of worship. Haggai tells his people this in no uncertain terms. "*Is it time for you to dwell in your ceiled (paneled) houses while this house lieth waste?*" Then as now, those who object most to building an adequate house of worship are those who spend most on their own houses.

Actually, the message becomes even more pointed in our time if we read *Ephesians 2:19-22*. Whereas Haggai is concerned with building a building of wood and masonry, we are concerned with building the *real* temple of God, the church constructed not of materials but of men.

To make these excuses for not getting on with *this* task is to tamper with and neglect the most important work in the world. Jesus Himself has spoken to this neglect, "Seek ye first the Kingdom and take no thought saying What shall ye eat? or What shall we drink? or Where-withal shall we be clothed? After all these things do the Gentiles seek." (*Luke 12:29*)

CONSIDER YOUR WAYS . . . WHY? . . . v. 5-11

Stop and think, God's word through Haggai challenges the people. "*You have sown much, and bring in little.*" You work hard in the fields, you plant and till and labor for the harvest, but the harvest is scant and meager.

"*You eat, but you have not enough.*" You are not starving but you are not satisfied, there is never enough of the right food on your tables.

"*You drink, but you are not filled.*" There is a drought. Drinking water is scarce and must be used sparingly. In such dry times the vineyards do not produce properly and the wine is in scant supply.

"*You clothe you, but there is none warm.*" No one is naked; you have clothes, but they are not adequate. You are not warm. Your clothes do not provide comfort.

"*He that earneth wages earneth wages to put into a bag with holes.*" There are jobs. Men are employed, but their wages are inadequate. No one is able to "make ends meet." There is too much month left, at the end of the paycheck.

Again "consider your ways," look how things are. *You looked for much.* Your expectations were high when you started home from Babylon. But "*it came to little.*"

You were able to bring home crops and wages, but "*I did blow upon it.*" instead of blessing and magnifying it.

WHY? SAITH JEHOVAH OF HOSTS . . .

Have you not wondered why things are as they are? It is because you have not "put first things first." "*Go up into the mountain, and bring wood and build the house . . . my house lieth waste while ye run every man to his own house.*"

"*Therefore*" for your sake . . . to teach you a lesson . . . I withhold the moisture and the earth withholds its fruit.

"I CALLED FOR A DROUGHT."

How many Christians do you know today who are living dull monotonous lives, who are not really rejoicing in the Lord, whose life

is seemingly blessed little more than their pagan neighbors? Such people are pre-occupied with their own affairs. They have not learned that God's temple, the church, must come first. They do not believe that Jesus spoke the truth for our time when He said if we seek His kingdom first these *things* will be added to us.

It is our own fault if we live a humdrum life of spiritual drought and dissatisfaction.

AND JEHOVAH STIRRED UP THE SPIRIT OF ZERUBBABEL . . . v. 12-15

To the man who obeys the message of God in whose heart the Spirit of God has stirred there is no question of the right *time*. Such a one lives by eternal values. The only time he knows is *now*. The only thing that counts is God's work.

Zerubbabel got the message, and so did Joshua the high priest and so did God's remnant. They were still close enough to the captivity to know God was not playing games. Their fathers had refused to hear Isaiah and Amos and Micah and the rest and they had themselves grown up in exile as a consequence.

That was enough. They obeyed the voice of Jehovah as it had spoken through Haggai.

Then came the reassurance of God.

(Verse 12) Haggai is careful to record that not just the leaders but the people themselves heeded His admonition. The Word of God brought about obedience, from the greatest to the least. The lack of wisdom manifest in their failure to fear God is in contrast to the response of the remnant. The fathers had refused to hear the pre-exilic prophets because they did not fear God. Fearing God, their children obeyed the message of the Lord voiced by Haggai.

I AM WITH YOU . . . v. 13

The very first sign of obedience was seized upon by God. He, at once, declares because of their fear and obedience that He is with them.

GOD STIRRED UP THE SPIRIT . . . v. 14

The Spirit stirred in both Zerubbabel and Joshua and the people. Through the preaching of His word through Haggai, God's Spirit stirred in the hearts of His covenant nation.

It is ever so. When His Word is heeded and obeyed, His presence through the Spirit is with His people.

And the result is inevitable. The people in whom the Spirit stirred rose up and built the house of God.

And the God Who lived in Haggai's day is just the same today. When God's covenant people, both leaders and others, fear the Lord, heed and obey His Word, the Spirit *always* moves in their hearts and His house is built. We who are, as Christians, concerned with the building of the real temple, the church, will do well to learn this eternal lesson. We do not need to agonize and grovel and beg for His Spirit. We need rather to *fear* Him, even in this sophisticated age when a misunderstanding of His love often causes us to be overly familiar and without fear. We need to obey Him as He tells us through inspired writers what He would have us do. When this is done, His Spirit will move in us and His house will be built.

By the same token, we need to recognize it is His Spirit who must motivate us if what we do is to be *His* work. Our American over-emphasis on methods and techniques for church growth often seems to deny this. As Don Atkin put it recently, "We need to stop trying to get Him into our programs and become concerned for getting ourselves into His." It is one thing to know the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is quite another to know the Spirit Himself. It is not enough to know the Word of God. We must know the God of the Word!

IN THE FOUR AND TWENTIETH DAY . . . v. 15

It was just twenty three days from the beginning of Haggai's preaching to the beginning of building. Surely God must *always* be pleased when His people are so responsive to His Word.

THE SECOND MESSAGE . . . Haggai 2:1-9

RV . . . In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing? Yet, now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work; for I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts, according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my Spirit abode among you: fear ye not. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry

land; and I will shake all nations; and the precious things of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts.

LXX . . . In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the Lord spoke by Aggaeus the prophet, saying, Speak now to Zorobabel the son Salathiel, of the tribe of Juda, and to Jesus the son of Josedec, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, saying, Who is there of you that saw this house in her former glory? and how do ye now look upon it, as it were nothing before your eyes? Yet now be strong, O Zorobabel, saith the Lord; and strengthen thyself, I Jesus the high priest, the son of Josedec; and let all the people of the land strengthen themselves, saith the Lord, and work, for I am with you, saith the Lord Almighty; and my Spirit remains in the midst of you; be of good courage. For thus saith the Lord Almighty; Yet once I will shake the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the choice portions of all the nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord Almighty. Mine is the silver, and mine the gold, saith the Lord Almighty. For the glory of this house shall be great, the latter more than the former, saith the Lord Almighty; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord Almighty, even peace of soul for a possession to every one that builds, to raise up this temple.

COMMENTS

THE WORD OF JEHOVAH . . . v. 1-2

Claiming again the inspiration of God for his message, Haggai, a month after rebuilding was resumed, addressed himself again to the civil and spiritual leaders and the people.

THE FORMER GLORY . . . v. 3

There were a few who had returned from captivity who longed for the "good old days." The modest dimensions and decor of the second temple could not compare with the splendor of the first. (*I Kings* 6:22, 28, 30, 32, & 7:48-50)

"How do you see it?" asks the prophet. The temple they were

building was nothing compared to their memory of the one erected by Solomon.

Traditionally, several things were absent from the second temple by which it could not compare to the first:

(1) The Ark of the Covenant was gone. Its fate still remains a mystery. The idea that it was taken directly into heaven has been held by some on the strength of *Revelation 11:19*. The apocalyptic nature of Revelation, however, makes a literal interpretation very unreliable.

(2) The Shekinah glory . . . the pillar of cloud and of fire was absent . . . proof that the full glory of God was not yet come.

(3) Following Malachi, the Spirit of prophecy was apparently silent and the inspired prophet was replaced by the professional scribe.

(4) The sacred fire, kindled by God upon the altar was extinguished, and God no longer smote the priests for replacing it with strange fire. (cf. *Leviticus 10:1-ff*)

(5) The Urim and Thummim were also gone. (cp. *Exodus 28:30*) The literal meanings of these words are *lights* and *perfections*, respectively. The exact nature of them is problematical. They may have been some divine manifestation or they may have been an appendage on the breastplate of the priests. (cp. *Deuteronomy 33:8* and *I Samuel 28:6*) It has been suggested that the Urim and Thummim were jewels set in the breast plate of the high priest. (cp. *Exodus 28:29*, *Exodus 39:8* and *Leviticus 8:8*)

No doubt much else was lacking. The first temple had been erected by a wise ruler of a wealthy nation in collaboration with building experts. The second was built by a vassal state, with no king and no real wealth.

This actual inferiority was exaggerated in the memory of those in whose minds sixty-six years had no doubt added even to the real glory of Solomon's temple.

The key to Haggai's message to those who were depressed and disappointed in the inferiority of their handiwork, is the question "*how do ye see it?*" They were overly concerned with material embellishments.

I AM WITH YOU . . . v. 4-5

The important thing in regard to the rebuilding of the temple, as God saw it, was that His people were back in their land, and He was with them. And His presence is according to the everlasting covenant.

Here is the heart of the prophetic message. This is the reason the remnant had been returned. This is the reason the temple must be rebuilt. His promise to bless all the nations of the earth in the seed of Abraham was the reason they became a nation in the beginning. (cf. *Exodus 2:34, 19:5-6*) It is equally the reason for the restoration of their national identity.

In their national pride and religious exclusiveness, they were about to forget again the reason for their existence. It was vital that, upon this restoration as in their beginnings as a people (*Genesis 1:1-3*) and as a nation (*Exodus 19:5-6*), that the people be once more made aware of their covenant purpose. Here is the real purpose of the preaching of Haggai, for in the reconstruction of the temple was the symbolic re-affirmation of the covenant.

THE LATTER GLORY OF THIS HOUSE SHALL BE GREATER THAN THE FORMER . . . v. 6-9

Through the restored remnant the Christ would come. Never again would Baal be worshipped among His people. They would forget the covenant purpose as a nation. Their religion would become a hollow form, but with it all, the faithful few would remain true and the Messiah would come in fulfillment of the covenant promise. (cp. *Matthew 1:1, Luke 1:33, 55, 72-73*)

"*Thus saith the Lord*" in verse six is dependant upon the covenant mentioned in verse five.

The phrase "in a little while" has been rendered variously, "it is as yet a little while," and "one period more—a brief one it is." The Septuagint has "yet once." The sense is that of repetition.

Just as the power of the Lord had shaken Sinai (*Hebrews 12:26*) as God manifest His moral power to Israel, so again He will demonstrate His power in the shaking of "the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land and . . . all nations, and the precious things of all nations." (v. 7)

The Hebrew writer sees the fulfillment of this in the coming of the new covenant. (*Hebrews 12:18-29*) The coming of the church, the new temple (*Hebrews 8:1-ff*) and ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant (*Galatians 3:29*) shook and put an end to the nations of the pre-Christian world.

The shaking began during the "silent years" between the Testaments. The Persian Empire crumbled before Alexander. Alexander's kingdom, divided after his youthful death, in turn gave way to Rome,

and the west began its current domination of the east which heretofore had set the culture of the world.

"*The desire of all nations*" (KJV) in verse seven is unmistakably Messianic. There could hardly be a more vivid expression of the covenant promise, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Even the rabbis saw in it the coming of the Messiah. The true riches of God, the "silver" and "gold" of verse eight will make the glory of the house of God outshine the glory of Solomon's temple.

And so the prophet comforts the people in such a way as to turn their minds from their ambitions of national grandeur to the glorious hope of covenant fulfillment.

The statement in verse nine, "*the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former,*" is deserving of special attention. The argument of the book of Hebrews for the superiority of the new covenant over the old is a glorious re-statement of this truth.

It is patently obvious that Haggai cannot be saying that when the second temple is complete it will be more splendid than the first. This simply could not be true in the nation's post-exilic circumstances. Historically it was not true, even with Herod's embellishments during the Roman era. Haggai is looking to something far more meaningful than stone and mortar.

Lump Solomon's temple, Zerubbabel's temple, and Herod's temple all together and their glory cannot surpass that of the real temple, the church. That the Jews identified the material temple with their ambitions for national glory was a grave error for them. Ultimately, it brought about their rejection of Jesus. But it did not alter the spiritual facts. (cp. *Daniel* 2:36-45, 4:19-27, *Ezekiel* 40-48, *Zechariah* 2:3-13, 6:9-15, 8:13, 18-23, 9:9-10, 14:16-21, *Psalms* 145:6, 9-13, 21)

The true tabernacle, or temple is superior to the old because it is based on a superior revelation by a superior Revelator (*Hebrews, chapters* 1-3) and because it is ministered by a superior priesthood. (*Hebrews* 4:14-10:18) It is more glorious than "the former" because it is related to God by a better covenant and accomplishes better services. The scene, conditions and results of its ministry are ideal whereas those of the old temple were symbolic, shadowy types of the real temple. The former temple was passing away, the latter temple is eternal. The sacrifices offered in the former were dead animals. Those in the new are living men. (*Romans* 12:1-2)

The promise of peace is also related to the new temple rather than the old. The peace which God gives to those who are the new temple,

the spiritual house (*I Peter 2:5*), is beyond the comprehension of those who think of material glory. (*Philippians 4:7*)

The world seeks peace in terms of silent guns and rusted swords. The world seeks peace in terms of easy going tolerance in all human relationships. The world seeks peace through positive thinking, tranquilizers and electro-therapy.

But the peace which prevails in the true and more glorious temple of God is not "as the world gives." (*John 14:27*) Such peace comes only from complete surrender to and complete trust in Him Who is the meaning of the old temple and the High Priest of the new.

It is related to the reality of the Holy Spirit, not as a doctrine but as a present Person. (*John 14:26-27*) Haggai knew about this. In verse 5, he says "*My Spirit abideth among you, fear not.*"

THE THIRD MESSAGE . . . Haggai 2:10-19

RV . . . In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any food, shall it become holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by reason of a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith Jehovah; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean. And now, I pray you, consider from this day and backward, before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of Jehovah. Through all that time, when one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; when one came to the winevat to draw out fifty vessels, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the work of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith Jehovah. Consider, I pray you, from this day and backward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, since the day that the foundation of Jehovah's temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? Yea, the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomgranate, and the olive-tree have not brought forth; from this day will I bless you.

LXX . . . On the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Aggaeus the prophet, saying, Thus saith the Lord Almighty; Inquire now of the

priests concerning the law, saying, If a man should take holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and the skirt of his garment should touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. And Aggaeus said, If a defiled person is unclean by reason of a dead body, touch any of these, shall it be defiled? And the priests answered and said, It shall be defiled. And Aggaeus answered and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so are all the works of their hands; and whosoever shall approach them, shall be defiled (because of their early burdens: they shall be pained because of their toils; and ye have hated him that reproved in the gates.) And now consider, I pray you, from this day and beforetime, before they laid a stone on a stone in the temple of the Lord, what manner of men ye were. When ye cast into the cornbin twenty measures of barley, and there were only ten measures of barley: and ye went to the vat to draw out fifty measures, and there were but twenty. I smote you with barrenness, and with blasting, and all the works of your hands with hail; yet ye returned not to me, saith the Lord. Set your hearts now to think from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day when the foundation of the temple of the Lord was laid; consider in your hearts, whether this shall be known on the corn-floor, and whether yet the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-trees that bear no fruit are with you: from this day will I bless you.

COMMENTS

THE FOUR AND TWENTIETH DAY OF THE NINTH MONTH ... v. 10

The third message came from Jehovah to the prophet Haggai exactly three months after the favorable response of the people to the first message. As the first message cautions against false contentment and the second cautions against false discontentment, the third exhorts them not to build from false motives.

THUS SAITH THE LORD ... v. 11

As in the previous messages, so here, Haggai is careful to let his hearers know the message is not his but the Lord's.

ASK NOW THE PRIESTS CONCERNING THE LAW ...

This admonition is followed by two questions. The questions are, in essence, can the *holy* make the *unholy holy* and can the *unholy* make

the *holy unholy*? The priests' answers are accurate. To the first they answer no. To the second yes.

A basic principle is revealed here. The influence of holiness is not as far reaching as unholiness. A rotten apple will corrupt a barrel of good apples, but a good apple will not make a barrel of bad ones good.

"*So is this people.*" The construction of a holy temple will not automatically sanctify the land or its inhabitants any more than the flesh of a sacrifice will make holy a garment in which it is carried.

When the first temple stood, the people could not believe God would allow evil to come upon them. They made a fetish of the building. It must not happen again by assuming the work of re-building can sanctify an unclean people.

Here is a warning to today's Christian who assumes he is "right with God" because he associates with an active church, regardless of his personal commitment to God or trust in Jesus.

CONSIDER . . . BACKWARD . . . v. 15-17

Haggai challenges his people to consider what has happened since they returned from captivity, prior to the beginning of the reconstruction. Conditions have not changed since they began to build. Prosperity did not immediately result from their work on the temple. The reason was the far-reaching result of past neglect. It could not be erased by three months of obedience.

In verse 17 Haggai indicates that, although the people have resumed building, they have not really returned to the Lord. If they have, it is only recently. Here, just following their return from Babylon, is the beginning of the strange malady confronted by Jesus. "This people honoreth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me." (*Matthew 15:8*) Isaiah had confronted this same spiritual failure in the people prior to the captivity. (*Isaiah 29:13*)

A building program such as that in which Haggai's readers were engaged, or a full program of activity in the building, such as that in which Jesus' hearers participated, can neither one substitute for genuine commitment to God and concern for His covenant purpose.

CONSIDER . . . BACKWARD . . . v. 18-19

Again Haggai calls upon the people to remember. A new era is about to begin, as indicated in verse fifteen by the transitional phrase "and now." This seems to be the reason for Haggai's repeated emphasis on dates.

The term in Hebrew does not mean "backward" exactly, as our versions render it (v. 15 and 18). It is used rather to call attention from the past to the future. Past calamities are contrasted with the beginning of the new period of Jewish history.

The plea seems to be for patience. Since the laying of the first stones there has not been enough time for Jehovah to relieve the wants of the people short of a miracle. The fig and pomegranate and olive harvests are yet on the trees. Their present obedience will yet be rewarded.

THE FOURTH MESSAGE . . . Haggai 2:20-23

RV . . . And the word of Jehovah came the second time unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith Jehovah, and will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee, saith Jehovah of hosts.

LXX . . . And the word of the Lord came the second time to Aggaeus the prophet, on the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zorobabel the son of Salathiel, of the tribe of Juda, saying, I shake the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will overthrow the thrones of kings, and I will destroy the power of the kings of the nations; and I will overthrow chariots and riders; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword striving against his brother. In that day, saith the Lord Almighty, I will take thee, O Zorobabel, the son of Salathiel, my servant, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a seal: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord Almighty.

COMMENTS

Twice on the twenty-fourth day of the month the word of Jehovah came to Haggai. How it came we do not know. That the prophet considers his message as the Lord's rather than his own is unmistakable. The second time the word of Jehovah came it resulted in Haggai's fourth message.

Again the prophet addresses Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah. This fourth message is concerned with the time of fulfillment of the promises recorded in 2:6-9. (See comment above on Haggai's second message.)

The shaking of the heavens and earth here (v. 21) and in 2:6 cannot mean the chaos which threatened the Persian empire during and just prior to the accession of Darius in 521 B.C. Haggai's message was delivered in 520 B.C. when this threat had been largely abated by the decisive action of Darius.

God's promise to Zerubbabel has to do with the reversal of human values rather than political agitation. It occurred, according to the understanding of the Hebrew writer, with the establishment of the church. (cp. *Hebrews* 12:25-29) Verse 22 finds a parallel in *Ezekiel* 38:19-21. We shall find Zechariah confirming this idea in *Zechariah* 4:13.

As Richard Wolfe says, "Self destructive and mutually destructive wars shall rage on the earth and the power of the heathen shall be overthrown . . . by God." The Prince of Peace shall rule at last. (cf. *Psalms* 20:7)

The ultimate fulfillment of this oft repeated predictive prophecy is to be seen in the final great struggle (*Revelation* 20:7-10) ushering in the new heaven and new earth.

There is no reason to assume that Haggai mistakenly identifies Zerubbabel as the Messiah. His crowning, albeit secretly according to tradition lest it bring down the wrath of Persia upon Judah, could easily be seen as prophetic of Messiah's coming. In his time the nations did not flock to the temple for instruction, the world's kingdoms were not overthrown, the age of Messiah did not begin, and Zerubbabel himself did not live to participate in it.

Nevertheless, with the restoration of the remnant and the rebuilding of the symbolic temple, Zerubbabel can easily be seen as a type of Christ, just as David himself is frequently referred to in the same light. (eg. *Psalms* 16:8-11, 110:1)

This typology of Christ in Zerubbabel is seen in that he led the people out of the Babylonian bondage as Christ would lead His people from the bondage of sin. Zerubbabel built a temple to God, as Jesus is building the church. (cp. *Ephesians* 2:19-22)

May we, as Haggai's readers, be encouraged in our faithfulness to God to the building of the real temple by our hope of the coming great "Day of Jehovah."

EXPOSITION OF HAGGAI

Chapter XXIV—Questions

Exposition of Haggai

1. Write an outline of Haggai.
2. Haggai's first message is concerned with?
3. What were the results of the first message?
4. Discuss the ancestry of Zerubbabel in light of *Haggai 1:1*, *I Chronicles 3:17-19*, and *Luke 3:27*.
5. The message Haggai was _____ message.
6. Haggai's first message attacks _____.
7. How does the message apply to us who would build the church?
8. How does Haggai account for the drought and austere conditions which had beset the people?
9. Discuss "Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel."
10. What is the gist of Haggai's second message? To whom is it addressed?
11. What was missing from the second temple?
12. What is meant by "the latter glory of the house?"
13. Discuss Haggai 2:7 in light of *Hebrews 8:1-ff* and *Galatians 3:29*.
14. What is meant by "desire of all nations?"
15. What is the gist of Haggai's third message?
16. What false motives might have been involved in rebuilding the temple?
17. What malady confronting Haggai was also addressed by Jesus?
18. Show evidence that Haggai considered his message to be God's rather than his own.
19. Discuss the shaking of the heavens and earth (*Haggai 2:21* cp. *Haggai 2:6*)
20. Why could not this shaking have referred to the chaotic conditions of Darius' early reign?
21. Where in the Bible do we find the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy?
22. Discuss Zerubbabel as a type of Christ. Show parallels between them.