

PREACHING THROUGH HABUKKUK, ZEPHANIAH, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, AND MALACHI

The reading of these books is like taking a trip, in which much of the scenery is ordinary, but where one occasionally comes suddenly on a view of breath-taking splendor, These views are abundant reward for the journey.

Habakkuk prophesied in the days of Jeremiah, about 625-605 B.C. He spoke of the coming Chaldean invasion of Judea, and of the later destruction to come upon the Chaldeans themselves. From him comes the thought which Paul later adopted as the theme for the Book of Romans: "The righteous by faith shall live!"

Zephaniah, a descendant of King Hezekiah and therefore distant cousin of King Josiah, prophesied in Josiah's time, about 610 B.C. telling of the coming day of God's judgment on Judah. His message seems to have had much to do with the reformation accomplished by Josiah, and recorded in II Kings 22 and 23.

Haggai and Zechariah prophesied in Jerusalem nearly a hundred years later, about 520 B.C. The Babylonian captivity had come and passed according to the prediction of God's early messengers, and now the people of Israel had returned to a ruined city to build again, These prophets spoke especially to urge the rebuilding of the Temple. Zechariah's series of sermonical visions include brilliant flashes of Messianic prophecy, including the fact of Christ's atoning death and amazing details related to it.

Malachi, speaking in Jerusalem in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, not long before 400 B.C., gave God's final Old Testament message and warning to a disobedient nation. In it he shows how the people continue to show disrespect to God, even while following the forms of religion. He speaks of the coming day of the Lord, and of the messenger who shall be sent to prepare His way,

Commencement! This month's study brings to an end a four year course, Since then our Bible "Books of the Month," alternating between Old Testament and New, have covered the entire Bible, the New Testament being reviewed a second time during the latter half of the Old Testament study. This plan is completed,

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but it has furnished only a sketchy introduction to the wonders and beauties of God's Word, Now is the time to commence studying the Bible with constantly greater enjoyment.

Sermon Outlines Provided:

- "Yet I Will Rejoice" (Hab. 3:16-19)
- "Time to Build" (Hag. 1:1-11)
- "Thy King Cometh" (Zech. 9:9, 10)
- "Who? Me? In Default to God?" (Mal. 3:7-12)

Other Suggested Sermon Topics:

- "The Woes Men Work For" (Hab. 2:4-20)
- "God's Pure Language" (Zeph. 3:9-20)

QUESTIONS OVER HABAKKUK THROUGH MALACHI

1. What nation does God tell Habakkuk he is going to raise up against Israel? (Hab. 1:6)
2. By what will the righteous live? (Hab. 2:4)
3. Under what conditions would Habakkuk still rejoice in the Lord? (Hab. 3:17-18)
4. What kind of a day would the great day of the Lord be? (Zeph. 1:14-18)
5. What will God do to all of the gods of the earth? (Zeph. 2:11)
6. What did Haggai tell the people God wanted them to do? (Hag. 1:7-8)
7. What did God say was abiding in the midst of His people? (Hag. 2:5)
8. Whom does God say He is going to bring in? (Zech. 3:8)
9. What are some of the things the Lord says He hates? (Zech. 8:16-17)
10. What wages did Zechariah receive and what did he do with them? (Zech. 11:12-13)
11. What is God's attitude toward divorce? (Mal. 2:16)
12. How did God's people rob Him? (Mal. 3:8-9)
13. Whom is God going to send before the coming of the day of the Lord? (Mal. 4:5)

PREACHING THROUGH HABAKKUK

YET WILL I REJOICE

(Habakkuk 3: 16-19)

INTRODUCTION —

A funeral service opened with “Praise God from Whom . . .”

A, This is the tone of Habakkuk’s conclusion.

B. The book, from the time, and in the spirit, of Jeremiah.

1, God reveals that He raised up the Chaldeans to punish Judah.

2, Habakkuk remonstrates, “How shall the godless prevail?”

3. God replies that He will use, then destroy, Chaldea.
—Woes against the cruel, idolatrous nation.

4. Song of God’s greatness and final justice. Now read 3: 16-19.

I. FAILURES ON EARTH (vv. 16, 17).

A, Failure in the affairs of men (v. 16, from **ASV** for clarity).

— The prophet dreads, and is helpless before, the coming invasion.

1, Fear makes him physically weak and ill.

2. He can do nothing but await the calamity.

3. We share his sense of dread when we see the collapse of authority around us, the decay of morals among us, and the pressures of advancing Sovietism.

4, Yet we can at least pray!

B. Failure in the world of nature— famine (v. 17).

1. This is generally considered to be the province of God; has God himself failed?

2. Described is agricultural plight as bad as farmers habitually say it is!

a. Fruit failure (from blossom to harvest, from Washington apples to Florida citrus).

b. Fields failure (no wheat, soybeans, or corn!).

c. Flock failure (no beef or pork in the grocery cases this winter).

3, Where shall we turn?

II. FAITH IN HEAVEN (vv. 18, 19).

- A. What will I do? Rejoice in the Lord! (v. 18).
1. It is easier for Christians: “We glory in tribulation also. . . . For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:2-6). “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4, from Paul in prison to a church in poverty).
 2. (A city, New York, distraught at the news of President Lincoln’s assassination, is brought to calm by James A. Garfield’s shouted assurance, concluding, “God is in Heaven, and the government in Washington still stands.”)
- B. What has God done to give me that assurance? (v. 19).
1. He *is* my strength.
 - a. The eternal **I AM** is untouched by the changes of earth.
 - b. His creative power is available.
(Arkansas country editor Jack Blanton printed in his weekly newspaper a prayer for rain, explaining to God that his readers knew the power of God, and how to avail themselves of it in prayer for themselves, but most would rather do without rain than go to the trouble.)
 2. He *makes* me to stand and to walk.
—Again as Christians we have an advantage: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).

CONCLUSION —

From Mark 14:26—The Lord’s and apostles’ hymn of praise between the betrayal-departure of Judas in the upper room and the agony and betrayal in Gethsemane:

“O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever. . . . The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?”

(The Hallel hymn, Psalm 118:1-6).

PREACHING THROUGH HAGGAI

TIME TO BUILD

(Haggai 1:1-11)

INTRODUCTION —

The common cry, “If things were just different.” Last week we discussed the prophet’s response to the despair before the captivity — “Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah,” Now the circumstances of the return—still counsels of despair. Important thing is, “If people were different.”

I, THE STORY OF HAGGAI,

A. There were reasons for trepidation.

1. Seventy years’ captivity had sapped the nation’s vitality.
2. First return, **538 B.C.** — Temple started **535**.
Foundations laid —jealous Samaritans wrote letters to Artaxerxes, who ordered the building ceased.
- 3, Fifteen years brought general decline of spirits, health, and prosperity.
4. There was failure of crops.
5. Darius of Persia ascended the throne—Haggai’s message timely.

B. There was trepidation beyond reason.

1. “It is not the time to build the Lord’s house.”
When would the time come? No plan, just “not now.”

C. Haggai makes a comparison and a rebuke.

- 1, Citizens had used the intervening years to foster their own interests. Some had houses planked with cedar,
2. Business, home building, agriculture went on.

D. Haggai makes an explanation of their sorry lot.

1. National prosperity is tied to national righteousness.
“I pray that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (III John **3:2**).
- 2, Human life is not satisfied with material things alone.
“Is not the life more than meat and the body more than raiment?” (Matt. **6:25**).

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3. Big income is not necessarily prosperity.

“He that earneth wages earneth wages to put into a bag with holes.”

E. Haggai makes practical exhortation—“Seekye first the kingdom of God” (Matt. 6:33).

1. There the Temple was the symbol of their love of God.

2. Go up to the mountain, get timber, build the house.

F. Results.

— Within **24** days building was recommenced. Finished in four years. Became center **of** national life.

II. FOR US.

A. Trepidation.

1. Change of ministry—“Just when we begin to get acquainted!” — “There never will be one to take his place.” “It’s going to cost **so** much more than we thought.”

2. You can’t do much in election year, anyway.

3. Building needs limiting growth.

B. Comparison.

1. Churches do grow with new or old leadership.

2. Business, work, and home building go on according to desire.

C. Explanation.

1. The right kind of zeal, enthusiasm, labor will make right circumstance.

2. Doing nothing will never bring it about.

3. So the individual with Christ, or the nation—conditions are never permanently better till in Christ.

CONCLUSION —

Exhortation—

1. Back **up** committees - pulpit - building planning, finance.

2. Enter boldly into that long-intended commitment to personal service in Christ.

PREACHING THROUGH ZECHARIAH

THY KING COMETH

(Zechariah 9:9-10)

INTRODUCTION —

There was the sound of working again on Mt, Zion as Zerubabel's temple arose,

In the city, the voice of Haggai, reminding of the glories of the former Temple, and urging that the glory of God be not forsaken,

Now the visions of Zechariah, speaking of those glories.

— There was the building of the Temple.

— More importantly there was the building of a Kingdom.

Flashes of the Messiah,

I. THE COMING OF KINGS IN GREAT PROCESSION

A. Glorious to be among the victorious soldiers, but—
The captives and victims, the seamy side of their triumph.

The slaves brought back to wear out a dreary living death.

B, So came the conquering human kings.

Shalmanezer had returned in triumph to Damascus after Samaria's fall.

Nebuchadnezzar, with the smoke of Jerusalem's ruin still about him, to Nineveh.

Cyrus of Persia, with the tokens of his conquest over Assyria.

Now Darius, who commanded that the obstructions to building be removed.

C. God's kind of King goes beyond that. . . .

II. THY KING COMETH

A. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,

Until Shiloh come,

And unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be.

Binding his foal unto the vine

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And his ass's colt unto the choice vine;
He hath washed his garments in wine,
And his vesture in the blood of grapes"

(Gen. 49: 10, 11 —Jacob's blessing).

- B.** Just, and having salvation—How different from the wicked pride of many.

How shall one reconcile the two—*justice* and *salvation*?

"For the showing of his righteousness at the present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

- C.** Lowly—How reconcile with the vain pomp and boastings of the kings?

"I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29).

"He that would be greatest among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:26).

(Scene in the upper room, with the basin and towel).

- D.** Riding upon an ass.

1. The beast much respected—the useful servant of all. Contrast the horse, prize of the few, and worker of war. He shall come in peace.

2. Even upon a colt, the foal of an ass.

—His is the mark of purity—completely fulfilled in the Entry into Jerusalem.

III. THE FINAL COMING ●

A. The horse, chariot, and battle bow removed—coming in peace (Eph. 2:13-17).

B. His dominion from the River (Euphrates) to the ends of the earth.

"Make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19).

CONCLUSION —

Thy King cometh!

Has your King come?

PREACHING THROUGH MALACHI

WHO? ME? IN DEFAULT TO GOD?

(Malachi 3:7-12)

INTRODUCTION —

- A, John Doe is stopped by a policeman and responds with injured innocence: “What did I do wrong?”
- B. When God, through His messenger Malachi, reminded His people of His patience and their manifold sins of selfishness and indifference, they responded again and again with injured innocence, “Wherein have we . . .?”

I. YOU ROBBED ME (GOD) IN WITHHOLDING TITHES AND OFFERINGS (vv. 7, 8).

- A. The paying of tithes was a national obligation.
 - 1. It had been accepted by Jacob (Gen. 28:20-22).
 - 2. It was made obligatory under Moses (Lev. 27:30).
 - 3, It was Israel’s way of acknowledging material dependence upon God.
- B. Withholding, or defaulting upon an accepted contractual obligation becomes robbery, the appropriation to oneself of what belongs to another. (The Internal Revenue Service takes action against the tax defaulter.)
- C. So the people used God’s money to finish off their own houses while His temple **was** neglected (Hag. 1:4,9) and His ministry was unsupported (Neh. 13:10).
- D. What of our obligations to God as Christians?
 - 1. First is the giving of self to God in Christ (Rom. 12:1).
 - 2. It is as binding as taxes (see Matt. 22:21):

II. YOU WERE CURSED (v. 9).

- A. Material robbery brought material affliction.
 - 1. Failure of field crops and vintage (v. 11).
 - 2, Haggai 1:6 and II Chronicles 7:13 describe this material curse: —Drought, locusts, pestilence, and lack of enjoyment in material things.
- B. What happens to Christians who renege on their commitments to God?
 - 1. Paul cites sickness and death of those who commune, “not discerning the Lord’s body” (I Cor. 11:29, 30).

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- 2, Even our hymns bewail the misery of those who “left their first love” (Rev. 2:4, 5). “Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord?”

111. MAKE GOOD ON YOUR OBLIGATION! (v. 10).

- A. God (through Malachi) commanded, “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse.”
 1. It was needed for support of Temple and priesthood.
 2. It was needed as a symbol of God’s relation to Israel.
 3. It was needed especially for renewal of relationship with God by His people.
- B. Even Christians are urged to bring money “as the Lord has prospered” (I Cor. 16:1, 2).
 1. This was for relief fund for poor in Jerusalem.
 2. Procedure is like “Faith-Promise,” as God enables.
- C. The bringing of self is most important (II Cor. 8:5).
 1. “Now I belong to Jesus.”
 2. This includes my time, pride, and ambition.

IV. YOU SHALL BE BLESSED (vv. 10-12).

- A. Malachi promised material blessings in abundance.
 1. This would prove that God was in it.
 2. It would become a testimony to the nations.
- B. Should Christians expect prosperity for faithfulness?
 1. Some cite the economic stability of tithers, and promise satisfaction in tithing.
 2. Kansas farmer, enthusiast for missions, says crops and markets have become more favorable. “If God sees fit to work things out for me, I’m grateful; but to take this as a way to financial success would be using God to improve your bank account; and that’s all wrong, Love and serve Him for His sake, not for money!”
- C. The greater blessing: “Jesus’ love is sweeter, Sweeter as the years go by.”

CONCLUSION —

From Psalm 23: “I shall not want . . . My cup runneth over. . . Goodness and mercy shall follow me . . . and I shall dwell in God’s house for ever!”