

HAGGAI (Teacher's Edition)

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| I. The Completion of the Latter Temple | 1 | |
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AUTHOR & WHEN THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN-

The prophet Haggai, whose name means “festive”, wrote this book. He was an older contemporary of Zechariah and one of the postexilic prophets. He, Zechariah and Malachi faced a very different situation than the pre-exilic prophets. The earlier prophets confronted a people who tended to depend upon physical ceremonies and buildings rather than upon a true relationship with God marked by obedience. In contrast, the post-exilic prophets ministered to a discouraged and apathetic people who were tempted to believe that nothing they did from a religious stand point really made any difference. The people Haggai was called to minister to were influenced by the Persian view of all religions as equal in value, with the result that they saw little value in paying careful attention to their distinctive laws and practices- hence they were not much concerned with building the temple. Into this potentially horrendous situation, we see the pastoral character of the postexilic prophet. To keep God's people from being assimilated into the pagan cultures around them, Haggai and Zechariah prophetically encouraged the people to distinguish themselves by the character of their obedience- manifested by the rebuilding as well as the reestablishment of the Mosaic Law. Haggai's ministry covered a period of less than four months during the second year of King Darius who ruled Persia 522-486 B.C. This fixes Haggai to 520 B.C.

ABOUT THE BOOK, BASIC THEMES & TRUTHS & APPLICATIONS-

The Book of Haggai is very important for several reasons. One is that he laid the foundations of later Judaism on which Christianity was to build. Another was the stress on the linking of worship and work, a characteristic feature of Jesus' teaching and of the New Testament in general. Also, he revived hope for the future in a dejected community. Finally, the book provides important historical data on the post-exilic period where information is scanty. Some scholars think he neglected the moral element, but he really stressed a return to the basics of worship and a close relationship between worship and work. Both are important.

This small book is filled with awesome truths applicable to us! Though brief, it preaches four sermons. The basic theme seems to be quite clear: the remnant must **reorder its priorities** and complete the temple before it can expect the blessings of God. In this theme, Haggai addresses three common problems God's people face with their solutions.

Disinterest (1:1-15): The people had returned from exile and had started the work of God, but with opposition and difficulty, they stopped and became more interested in building their **own homes and lives**. To this God says they are **fruitless** (1:5-6) because they have turned from God's purposes to **their own**, and that they will never produce anything lasting while building their own kingdom and not His. If people will recognize this and then yield to God what they have and have noble purposes- **minds and work centered** on His Kingdom and its precepts- then God can accept what they do because He will be **glorified in it**.

Discouragement (2:1-9): The older people lamented that the rebuilt temple was nothing like the previous one. This discouraged the younger ones to the point that **the work stopped** in less than **a month**. Learn not to speak discouraging words! To this God speaks a word that tells the people that they should work with a view of the day when God WILL fill His house with Glory. This is both an **immediate and long range solution** to overcoming any discouragement we face- **be strong and work now**, knowing we will reap a reward in due time (2:4, and Galatians 6:9)

Dissatisfaction (2:10-23): The people expected that they would have an immediate reversal of their fortunes after all their years of inactivity. The prophet speaks to this with a question about clean and unclean. The implication is that uncleanness **is infectious** while **holiness is not**. This truth should be clear to us all: the work of a **short time** (3 months) cannot undo **the neglect** of many years (16). But the very next thing God speaks is astonishing: "But from this day I will bless you." (2:19)

Truly, Haggai issues a clear call to us, that we should set ourselves to the task God has assigned us. Nothing should cause us to turn from our divine responsibilities. In fact, a clear practical truth is found in Haggai 1:5-9. If we will **build God's house**, that is, **win and disciple people** who are now the temple of God, we will always **have provision**. Could it be that many people suffer a lack of provision because they are not busy about God's business?

One last thing of note in this awesome book is the emphasis on the **cooperative roles** of prophet, priest, prince and people. God's Kingdom requires **teamwork** to accomplish its divine task.

A POSSIBLE KEY WORD-

This book revolves around one thing, which is a key phrase: **THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE**. This speaks not just to them, but also prophetically to the future coming of Jesus- God's Glory greater than any former glory.

KEY VERSE(S) & CHAPTER-

For me, the key verse sums up Haggai's purpose and God's call to His people: **Haggai 1:7,8**. As to key chapter, I chose **Haggai 2** because it deals with the future as well as their day. The prophetic significance of **2:6-9** is amazing as it speaks to the **Tribulation**, the **final harvest**, and the **Second Coming**.

JESUS REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

- Haggai is a type of Jesus, encouraging us to do the work of God
- Joshua the high priest typifies Jesus in His role as High priest
- Jesus is the greater Glory of the latter house in 2:6-9
- Zerubbabel is a type of Christ in that he was a yielded man who was used for God's purpose and he was in the genealogy of Jesus- doubly descended from David, through his sons Solomon and Nathan

THE HOLY SPIRIT REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

- The Holy Spirit is the one who stirs up the spirits of the people and leaders to work for God
- The Holy Spirit is spoken of in 2:5 as remaining among His people, being a vital part of God's covenant with His people, and removing fear because of His presence
- The prophetic ministry, God speaking, and even encouragement are the working of the Holy Spirit