

Minor Prophets: Haggai

Background

- What we know about Haggai is from his own book and the book of Ezra.
- He was a contemporary of Zechariah's and they worked together to encourage the people to rebuild the temple.
- His name means "festal". Possibly he was born during a festival month.
- His book gives us very specific dates for his prophesy. It occurred over a period of 3 months during the reign of King Darius. He began at the end of August and completes his prophesy in December of 520 B.C.

Historical Context

- Judah was in exile to Babylon in 586 B.C.
- In 536 B.C. they return under the decree of Cyrus the Great, King of Persia, fulfilling Jeremiah's prophesy (ch 25)
- Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the priest lead the people back and they begin to rebuild the temple.
- Surrounding people who had been placed in Judah by Babylon ask to help with the temple. Zerubbabel refuses help. In response the surrounding people become adversaries and send a letter of complaint to King Artaxerxes. The king commands that construction stop.
- King Darius takes the throne in 520 B.C. It has been 16 years since the temple project began.
- Due to the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, construction resumes and King Darius gives his blessing. 520 B.C.
- The temple is completed in 515 B.C.

What Does Haggai Say?

- The First Message: A Call to Rebuild the Temple (ch1)
 - The People's indifference and Poverty (1:1-11)
 - The People's Response: Repentance (1:12-15)
- The Second Message: God's Greater Temple and Blessings (2:1-9)
 - Encouragement from God's Presence (2:1-5)
 - Encouragement from God's Promise of Blessing (2:6-9)
- The Third Message: God's Blessing for a Defiled People (2:10-19)
 - The Cause of Their Defilement (2:10-14)
 - The Results of Their Defilement: Covenant Curses (2:15-17)
 - God's Determination to Bless Them (2:18-19)
- The Fourth Message: God's Victory for His People (2:20-23)
 - God's Overthrow of the Nations (2:20-22)
 - The Enthronement of God's Ruler (2:23)

What Does It Mean?

- The listeners (Zerubbabel, Joshua and the people) realize that their choices deeply matter to God and should to them as well.
- Their actions effect what God does: Obedience = Blessing or Unfaithfulness = Ruin
- The obedience and faithfulness of God' people are key components of how God enacts His will in the world.
- God's people need to respond in Humility and Action
- It seems that an obedient heart is open to the stirring of the Spirit
- Zerubbabel and the temple are archetypal. They stand for promises that God will fulfill in the future. It is also possible that, similar to God's withdrawn blessing when the temple construction stopped, these promises were

contingent of the obedience of the people. They could have been realized, but disobedience stopped God's hand of blessing and relegated the promises to archetypes, to which the Jewish people looked with hope and longing.

How Does it Apply?

- While the people were admonished to put God's temple first, we need to remember that as New Testament believers **we** are the temple of God. Are we creating and cultivating a comfortable existence for ourselves through entertainment etc., but not building up the mind of Christ within us? How do we devote our time? 1 Cor 6:19.
- Are we obeying the clear commands and directions of Scripture?
- Are we reading and meditating on Scripture? Are we devoting time to prayer?
- "God's work, done God's way, will never lack God's supply." -Hudson Taylor