

Through the Bible Book by Book

Old Testament

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Haggai

Author: Little is known of the personal history of Haggai, "*the prophet of the second temple*," except that he prophesied after the captivity and that his mission was to encourage the people in the rebuilding of the temple. Haggai's work was intensely practical and important. the Lord employed him to awaken the conscience and stimulate the enthusiasm of his compatriots in the rebuilding of the temple. No prophet ever appeared at a more critical juncture in the history of the people, and, it may be added, no prophet was more successful."

Haggai is the first of the prophets known as the post-Exilic; i.e., prophesying after the captivity. Zechariah and Malachi are the other two.

Read Ezra Chs. 1-7 for the historical background of this prophecy.

Theme: Under the favorable decree of Cyrus, the Jewish remnant returned to their land under the leadership of Zerubbabel, their governor and Joshua, their high priest. After settling in the land, the people set up an altar of burnt offerings on the site of the temple.

Two years later amid great rejoicings, the foundations of the temple were laid. Their rejoicing soon turned into sadness, for through the efforts of the hostile Samaritans, the work was ordered discontinued by an imperial decree. For sixteen years the temple remained unfinished until the reign of Darius, when that king issued an order permitting its completion.

But in the meantime the people had become indifferent and selfish, and instead of building the temple, they were occupied with the beautifying of their own homes. As a result of this negligence they were punished with drought and barrenness:

Their enquiry concerning the reason for these calamities gave Haggai the occasion for his message, in which he declared that the people's selfish indifference in regard to the needs of the temple was the cause of their misfortunes. We shall sum up the theme as follows: The result of the neglect of the temple's completion - divine displeasure and punishment; the result of the temple's completion - divine blessing and promises of future glory.

CONTENTS: The book divides itself naturally into four distinctly mentioned messages:

- I. First message: the neglect of the second temple's completion (1:1-15).
- II. Second message: the glory of the second temple (2:1-9).
- III. Third message: sacrifice. Without obedience (to rebuild the temple) will not sanctify (2:10-19).
- IV. Fourth message: the safety and perpetuity of the house of Israel (2:20-23).

I. First message: the neglect of the second temple's completion (Ch. 1:1-15)

- 1. The excuse for the neglect (vv. 1, 2). "**The time is not come that the Lord's house should be built.**" The people were probably waiting for some special revelation from GOD before they would perform what they knew to be their duty.
- 2. The cause of the neglect - the people's selfishness (vv. 3, 4). They did not wait for any special command to build and embellish their own homes.
- 3. The punishment for the neglect - drought and barrenness (vv. 5-11).
- 4. The repentance for the neglect (vv. 12-15).

The people set to work on the temple.

II. The second message: the glory of the second temple (Ch. 2:1-9)

- 1. The people's discouragement (vv. 1-3). Remembering the magnificence of Solomon's temple, the people were evidently discouraged by the thought that the present temple would not equal it in beauty and glory. They knew that it would lack the Shekinah glory that filled the first temple.
- 2. The Divine encouragement (vv. 4-9). The glory of the second temple will be greater than that of the first, declares the Lord, for Messiah Himself, the Lord of glory, will enter it. This was fulfilled at CHRIST's first coming when He entered the temple (John 2:13-25; compare Malachi 3:1).

There may be a more complete fulfillment at His second coming.

III. Third message: sacrifice. without obedience (to rebuild the temple) will not sanctify (Ch. 2:10-19)

- 1. A parable (vv. 10-14). The lesson contained in these scriptures is as follows: holiness is not contagious, but evil is. The sacrifices offered on the altar were not sufficient to sanctify a land which the disobedience of the people had polluted.

Therefore the land was barren. "The faint aroma of sanctity coming from the altar was too feeble to pervade the secular atmosphere of their lives. Haggai argues that Israel's sacrifices for sixteen years had been unclean in GOD's sight, and had brought them no blessing, because the temple

was in ruins."

2. A warning (vv. 15-18). The blight upon the land was caused by disobedience.

3. A promise (v. 19). Now that the people have set themselves to the work in earnest, the Lord will bless them.

IV. Fourth message: the safety and perpetuity of the house of Israel (Ch. 2:20-23)

1. The coming world commotions (2:20-22). Comparing Haggai 2:6, 7 and Hebrews 12:26-28, we see here a reference to the final world upheaval preceding CHRIST's second coming.

2. The assurance of safety (v. 23). The national disturbances in Zerubbabel's time had perhaps made him fear for the safety of his nation. As a representative of the house of David and an ancestor of the Messiah, he receives a promise of protection and safety for himself and his people.

All the nations of the world shall be shaken, but the Jewish nation under Messiah, of whom Zerubbabel is a type, shall be established.

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