

Kiama Anglican Church
Christ Church Kiama with St. Paul's Minnamurra

HAGGAI:

'The LORD Almighty
Declares ...'

LEADER'S NOTES

Bible Studies: Term 3: 2011

HAGGAI:

“This is what the LORD Almighty says”

Haggai 1:2,5,7; 2:6,11

The phrase above occurs five times in the book of. The phrase ‘declares the LORD’ (in the NIV Bible) is used eleven times. What Haggai wants us to understand is that the words he is presenting are the very words of the God who is Israel’s covenant keeping LORD.

For the people who hear Haggai’s message, in the first instance, the times are perilous. They are members of a small group of Israelites who have returned from the Babylon captivity to the Promised Land. As we know from Ezra-Nehemiah they are surrounded by opposition and being true to their calling is not easy. The main thrust of Haggai’s message is that they are to look carefully at their lifestyle priorities and that they should put God and obedience to him first. As always those who trust the Lord will be blessed while those who put other things first will find God’s displeasure.

These five short studies encourage us to look to our priorities and our choices in regard to how we serve Jesus in our materialistic 21st Century world.

Greg Holmes - JULY 2011

HAGGAI: THE LORD ALMIGHTY DECLARES

THE SECTIONS OF THE STUDIES

Read the Bible

It is good to read the passage for the week at the start of each study. Each of the passages in Haggai is relatively short so reading them aloud is worthwhile.

It may actually be possible to read all of Haggai up to the study each week. This would be helpful for understanding the flow of the prophecy.

Discuss

The following three sections are the study proper. They are for the group meeting. As the leader you need to make some choices about which ones to do and how much time to spend on each.

Explore the Basics

These look at the basic ideas in the passage. I would recommend that each week you do these.

Deeper and Wider

As the heading suggests these dig deeper into the themes of the passage or look more widely at Scripture. It is probably among these that you as leader need to make some choices. Of course if you decide to have a go at them all I am sure it will be worthwhile.

Apply

These Questions should be done each week or at least you should work hard in your group each week to APPLY the lessons learnt to daily, everyday, hard slog, living in our world.

Haggai's world was very different to ours and their social, political and religions structures quite different. In these studies we need to understand the original meaning then dig into that to see the crossover points and then apply this 5th Century BC material to our 21st Century AD world through the lens of the coming of Jesus.

We need to make the rubber of the 'idea' hit the road of our lives, thoughts and actions. - One of the problems in writing 'application' type questions is not knowing where all the individuals in groups etc. are up to. If you, as the group leader, can see a better application of the material - DO IT. - The important thing is to relevantly apply what we are talking about to our lives.

For next week : This is the passage for next week.

Please note that my answers below are not the 'correct' answers or what you are trying to get to in the study. I have set them out as a guide to my thinking only and an assistance to you.

*These Leaders Notes are meant to be the start of the assistance I am willing to give in regard to the studies. If you need anything further DO NOT hesitate to contact me.
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THE STUDIES

Study Date	Topic	Passage	Page No
1 Sun 31 Jul	<u>“Give careful thought to your ways”</u>	Haggai 1:1-11	5
2 Sun 7 Aug	<u>“The people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God”</u>	Haggai 1:12- 15	7
3 Sun 14 Aug	<u>“But Now Be Strong ... Do Not Fear”</u>	Haggai 2:1-9	9
4 Sun 21 Aug	<u>“From This Day on I will Bless You”</u>	Haggai 2:10- 19	11
5 Sun 28 Aug	<u>“For I have Chosen You”</u>	Haggai 2:20- 23	13

References:

Baldwin, J.G. ACTS (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries) (IVP, Leicester, 1972).

Boda, M. The NIV Application Commentary : Haggai (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004).

Pennant, D.F. “Haggai” in Carson, D.A.; France, R.T.; Motyer, J.A.; Wenham, G.J. (Eds) New Bible Commentary (21st Century Edition) (Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

Alden, R.L. “HAGGAI” in Gaebein, F.E., Douglas J.D. (Eds) THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE COMMENTARY (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1990)

Mackay, J.L. Focus on the Bible : Haggai Zechariah & Malachi : God's Restored People, (Fearn, Christian Focus, 2003).

Some introductory thoughts from BODA:

HAGGAI.

Little is known of this prophet who was so instrumental in the restoration of the Jewish community in the wake of the Babylonian exile. The book of Ezra honors him alongside Zechariah as instrumental in encouraging the community to rebuild the temple (Ezra 5:1–2; 6:14). The book of Haggai also bears witness to this role. Each of his messages is linked in some way to the rebuilding project, whether urging the initiation of building (Hag. 1:1–15), encouraging its continuation (2:1–9), or affirming the completion of a key stage (2:10–23).

The Community

HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH were involved in the community of Yehud, a province on the western fringe of the Persian empire. Through their books and other Jewish documents and remains from this period we can reconstruct the basic contours of this society.

Leaders. The community was led by two key figures who returned from Babylonian exile in the first phase of Persian rule after the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C.: Zerubbabel and Joshua.

Zerubbabel. There has been much discussion over the identity and ancestry of Zerubbabel. The connection to the Davidic line is probably what qualified Zerubbabel to serve as governor of Yehud.³³ Ezra and Nehemiah indicate that a man named Sheshbazzar served as governor in an earlier phase of the Persian period (Ezra 5:14) and that Nehemiah filled the same role in the middle of the following century (Neh. 5:14–18).

Joshua. The book of Haggai also highlights Joshua, son of the high priest Jehozadak. His genealogy reveals that he is part of the line of Zadokite priests.

People. The community that these figures led and to whom these prophets spoke was a diverse group. In simplistic terms one can identify two types of people. (1) There were those who had returned from the Diaspora (mostly in Mesopotamia, but also Egypt), a long list of whom is provided in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7. (2) There were those who had remained in or moved into the land following the demise of the kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.

The province in which this community lived was smaller than its preexilic monarchical counterpart, covering only the central hills of Judah. The population was only one-third of its preexilic size, estimated between 13,350 and 20,650, while the capital city Jerusalem was reduced to one-fifth of its preexilic size. Its economy was largely dependent on the traditional mix of agrarian and animal husbandry, with taxation received

through a combination of an emerging money system alongside an “in-kind” system.

PROPHECY AND LITERATURE. Typically prophecy is associated with people who reveal words or visions from God to his people. This is why prophetic books are often linked to a specific individual such as Isaiah (Isa. 1:1; 2:1; 13:1), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1–3), or Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1). But prophecy is not merely an oral phenomenon; it is also a written text. Prophetic figures and their entourage were concerned to preserve a literary record of the oral declarations of the prophet.

The prophets do, it is true, speak of future events, the “foretelling” aspect of prophetic ministry, but the majority of their prophecies were focused on the values and actions of their contemporaries, the “forthtelling” aspect of prophetic ministry. Even when they spoke of future events, in nearly every case they did so with an eye on the present generation. The prophets were also concerned with the past. They often recited the story of Israel (both its positive and negative elements) in order to challenge the present generation to obedience (see Jer. 2; Ezek. 16, 18, 20; Hos. 11).

New Testament use of the ancient prophets reveals sensitivity to both the foretelling and the forthtelling aspects of prophetic ministry.⁵¹ Although New Testament speakers and writers often show how Christ and the church fulfilled the expectations of ancient Hebrew prophecy (e.g., Matt. 1:23; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 2:6; Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:18; Jer. 31:15), they regularly draw on these ancient books as the foundation of their exhortations to the Christian community.

Not only did Christ say that he did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, forbidding breaking their commands (Matt. 5:17–20), but he also claimed that his commands were simply a summary of the prophet’s moral teaching (7:12; 22:40). The early church used prophetic calls to repentance (Acts 13:40; Hab. 1:5) and to faith (Rom. 1:17; Hab. 2:4; Rom. 10:11; Isa. 28:16; Rom. 10:13; Joel 2:32; 2 Cor. 6:2; Isa. 49:8; Heb. 10:37–38; Hab. 2:3–4) as invitations to experience God’s forgiveness in Christ.

New Testament theology is founded on prophetic material, laying the foundation for reflection on sin (Rom. 3:15–17; Isa. 59:7–8), sovereignty (Rom. 9:19–21; Isa. 29:16; 45:9; Rom. 9:13; Mal. 1:2–3), omniscience (Rom. 11:34; 1 Cor. 2:16; Isa. 40:13), divine wisdom (1 Cor. 1:19; Isa. 29:14), grace (1 Cor. 2:9; Isa. 64:4), resurrection (1 Cor. 15:54–55; Isa. 25:8; Hos. 13:14), and revelation (1 Peter 1:23–25; Isa. 40:6–8). The New Testament calls the people to a life of faithfulness by citing the prophets (2 Cor. 6:17; Isa. 52:11; Ezek. 20:34, 41; 1 Cor. 1:29–30; Jer. 9:24) while also encouraging hope and confidence in faith (1 Peter 3:13–16; Isa. 8:12).

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This evidence of the New Testament's use of the Hebrew prophets is reflected in Paul's description of the Old Testament to Timothy as "able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15) as well as "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (3:16). The first aspect highlights the role of prophecy to illuminate the great redemptive story both past and future, which culminates in the advent of Christ. The second aspect, which must be rooted in the first aspect, encourages the use of the Old Testament to shape faithful living in the present age.

Understanding Haggai and Zechariah demands sensitivity to the various contexts of these passages. (1) It requires exegesis of the message of this corpus, determining the meaning of the various messages in their original contexts and the way these texts spoke to their original communities. (2) It requires sensitivity to the way in which this message was appropriated by Jesus and his community. (3) Based on this foundation, this ancient text continues to speak to the community of faith today, identifying Jesus and his followers as the focus of eschatological hope while shaping our vision of the present and future of the church.

Mackay: Significant Dates:

Jerusalem Fall to the Babylonians	July 586BC
Babylon Captured by the Persians	October 539BC
Cyrus Decree permitting the Jews to return	538BC
First Attempt to rebuild the Temple	April 536BC
Foundation Laid in the Temple	December 520BC
Temple Completed	March 515BC
Ezra returns to Jerusalem	458BC
Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem	445BC
Alexander the Great invades Palestine	322BC

Study 1: HAGGAI 1:1-11

“Give careful thought to your ways”

Day	Reading	My Thoughts	Prayer Points
1	Read all of Haggai	<i>This is in each week’s list. Good to get the overview and be reminded of it. It is only 37 verses after all.</i>	
2	Hebrews 9:11-15	<i>The second and third day readings are links to the themes of the passage in Haggai. They are the passages that will be read in the services.</i>	
3	Matthew 5:1-12		
4	Malachi 1	<i>Malachi is another of the post-exilic prophets.</i>	
5	Haggai 1:1-11	<i>This is the passage for the week.</i>	

Study 1: HAGGAI 1:1-11

“Give careful thought to your ways”

Explore the Basics

Read the passage carefully together.

Boda: “HAGGAI SPEAKS INTO a community still feeling the aftershocks of a recent Persian political earthquake, which involved the mysterious death of the Persian emperor Cambyses and the ensuing rise of the new emperor, Darius, to the throne (522 B.C.). The prophetic work of Haggai, the political work of Zerubbabel, and the priestly work of Joshua must be seen against the backdrop of these recent events as the new emperor moved to restore peace to the edges of his empire. Although there is no evidence of rebellion in Egypt when Haggai’s first message is dated (520), by the next year Egypt would revolt and Darius would have to move to quell the rebellion.”

Mackay: “ *We have no record of any prophetic voice in the promised land since the time of Jeremiah. Daniel and Ezekiel had been prophets in Babylon, but now the long silence is broken and the restored community hears the Lord’s voice again.*”

Baldwin: “*Haggai challenges his compatriots to review their experience since they came back to Jerusalem, and to account for their poverty-stricken conditions of living. Disillusionment had set in after the first exhilarating sense of adventure had passed.*”

1. **When does all this happen?**

King Darius 2nd year, sixth month, first day.

We can date this fairly accurately as 29th August 520 BC.

All these messages are given in this same year the dates are

Hag. 1:1	29 Aug. 520
Hag. 1:15	21 Sept. 520
Hag. 2:1	17 Oct. 520
Hag. 2:10, 20	18 Dec. 520

Baldwin: “*Haggai apparently needed neither introduction nor identification (1:1), for both here and in Ezra 5:1; 6:14 he is simply ‘the prophet’, and to judge by the repetition in the Aramaic of Ezra 5:1 ‘the prophets, Haggai the prophet ...’ he was usually referred to in this way (cf. ‘Habakkuk the prophet’, Hab. 1:1). The absence of a patronym may indicate that his father was already forgotten, that prophets were few and therefore ‘the prophet’ was sufficiently specific, and that he was well known in the small Judean community.*”

Baldwin: “*The date with which the book begins must have stood out as one of momentous importance, because on that day, for the first time in the post-exilic era, the authentic voice of prophecy was heard.*”

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We need to note that almost throughout this prophecy Zerrubbabel and Joshua are addressed as representatives of the people.

Mackay: *The time note “is in itself a sad indication of the change circumstances of the Lord’s people. They were back in the land of promise but still far from regaining their independence. Formerly the books of the prophets had been dated by the reigns of their own kings.”*

2. **What are the people saying? What ‘good’ reasons might they have for saying this?**

Baldwin: *“The first word was addressed to the two leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua, but from verse 4 onwards it becomes clear that everyone is involved.”*

They say that it isn’t the right time to rebuild the temple. Not yet anyway. Perhaps – need to get established first, there is too much else to do, would cost too much. Need to get my own house in order first.

Baldwin: *“Then he taunted them with their own words the time has not yet come ..., which were realistic. There was much to be done and there were few to do it. The same able-bodied men were in demand for everything, and how could they make a living on their farms as well as build the temple? It is conceivable that some had questioned whether the rebuilding of the temple justified all the expenditure involved, and whether God expected it, for it was Cyrus, the Persian king, who had ordered it to be done (Ezra 1:2, 3; but cf. Isa. 44:28; 45:13). It has even been suggested that a miraculous provision of a new temple was expected because Ezekiel was ‘shown’ the temple he described (Ezek. 40-43), and made no mention of its reconstruction.”*

3. **What are they twice told to do? Why? What do they need to reconsider?**

Boda: *“This initial prophecy by Haggai is pure forthtelling; that is, the prophet declares this message to his contemporaries in order that they may respond to the priorities of Yahweh in their generation—in this case, the rebuilding of the temple.”*

Baldwin on v4: *“He challenges their priorities. The pronoun you is repeated in the Hebrew, so adding emphasis: ‘Is it a time for you, you I say, to dwell in your roofed-in houses?’ The reply might have been that it was unreasonable to expect anyone to live in a roofless house, but the question made its point. What worth did they set on their God when they left his temple in ruins?”*

“Give careful thought to your ways” v5,v7.

Boda: *“The phrase “give careful thought to your ways” is unique to Haggai (Hag. 1:5, 7; 2:15, 18) and calls for deep reflection over past behavior and experience. This identical phrase is repeated in 1:7 and creates an envelope around the exposure of past experience.”*

One assumes it is because God is not pleased with them.

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They need to look to the re-building of the temple which still lies in ruins. Boda: *“Consistently throughout these books the Word of God is placed at the center of community life—either the oral prophetic word proclaimed by Haggai and Zechariah or the written Word of ages past. These prophets call the community to bend their knees, open their ears, fix their eyes, and attune their hearts to this life-giving Word from the Lord Almighty.”*

4. **What is the result of for them of not giving careful thought to what they are doing?**

Well they have nice houses – panelled even.

But there is:

Poor harvests, discontent, inadequate clothing, Inflation. v6,9,11. God has acted against them – he has brought the above on them – a drought

Boda: *“In light of this, experiences of hardship should always become opportunities for spiritual reflection in our lives, turning us heavenward to ask hard questions. The various psalms of disorientation in the Psalter encourage us to ask God about the hardships that enter our lives..”*

Pennant: *“**Open your eyes.** The people were under a curse (Dt. 28:15-68). One effect of being under a curse is to come into confusion, and so fail to recognize what is happening (Dt. 28:28). This was the case here. The curse affected their food, drink, clothing and money. This experience of failing to see God’s hand in our troubles is common among believers today; we do not realize the effects of the sin that we tolerate in our lives (Am. 4). This is not to say that all disaster is because of sin, but rather that sin has consequences (Ho. 8:7).”*

Boda: *“In Haggai 1:11 creation’s lack of cooperation with humanity in the production of crops is traced to the Creator, who has “called for a drought.” Lest the people forget the ultimate cause behind these circumstances, once again Yahweh is the subject of the verb. This is consistent with the covenant foundation of Israel’s faith, and 1:10–11 may be drawn from a list of curses outlined in Deuteronomy 28 (esp. 28:22–24).”*

Deeper and Wider

1. **Read Deuteronomy 28:1-6 and 15-19. How are these relevant to the people of Haggai’s time?**

In the establishment of the covenant as the Israelites enter the promised land they are told that if they are obedient, put God first then they will be blessed – the land will indeed flow with milk and honey.

BUT – if they disobey then the land will not produce etc.

Remember here (and with us in Jesus) that these are not the requirements of a right relationship but the right response to it.

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2. **Read Matthew 5:1-12. Who does Jesus say will be blessed?**
Those who exhibit the values of the Kingdom of God. – These are the things we are to seek as members of God’s kingdom through Christ. God always blesses those who are obedient to him, who submit to his rule.
3. **The physical issue here is the rebuilding of the temple. Look at Exodus 25:8; 2 Samuel 7:11b-16 ; 1Kings 8:27-30 and John 1:14; 1 Peter 2:4-5. What is the significance of the temple and what does it represent? Where is the ‘temple’ now?**

The Passages

Exodus 25:8 “Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.

2Samuel 7:11 and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

“ ‘The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you:

12 When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. 15 But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.’”

1Kings 8:27 “But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! 28 Yet give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy, O LORD my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. 29 May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, this place of which you said, ‘My Name shall be there,’ so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. 30 Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

1Peter 2:4 As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like

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living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Much could be said about this.

The temple (and the tabernacle before it) for Israel is the visible representation of the presence of God with them. It is a reminder that He is their God and they are His people.

In John 1:14 Jesus is said to have ‘tabernacled’ (made his dwelling) among us – so the Temple becomes Jesus. (see John 2:19-22).

Peter then writes that after Jesus’ return to heaven that the ‘church’ – the gathered people of God – become the temple.

Tyndale: *“The rebuilding of the temple was at once an act of dedication and of faith. It was a symbol of the continuity of the present with the past, and expressed the longing of the community that, despite the exile, the old covenant promises still stood. What the temple was to symbolize in God’s purpose the prophets themselves could hardly be expected to appreciate, for Jesus spoke of his own body as the temple (Mark 14:58; John 2:19), which in its turn would be destroyed. Raised from the dead it was to be the corner stone of a holy temple made up of living stones, believers who become ‘a dwelling place of God in the Spirit’ (Eph. 2:19–22; 1 Pet. 2:4, 5), a church to be presented before him in splendour. For all this the rebuilding of the temple in the time of Haggai and Zechariah was a necessary preparation.”*

4. **Look again at Haggai 1:8. Why does God want the temple built?**

Because God wants to dwell with his people and be honoured by them.

Baldwin: *“‘That I may take pleasure in it’. When work is gladly done in order to please God it also brings him glory.”*

Baldwin: *“It follows that the honour of the Lord was bound up with the rebuilding of the temple. The nations had to know beyond any doubt that the God of Israel had not gone out of existence when the Israelites were removed from their land. ‘Then the nations will know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is in the midst of them for evermore’ (Ezek. 37:28). Israel had to know that God did not go back on his election, hence Zechariah’s assurance, ‘Cry out, Thus says the Lord of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion’ (Zech. 1:14); ‘The Lord ... will again choose Jerusalem’ (Zech. 2:12).”*

Apply

1. **What, in essence, is this passage about?**

This passage, indeed this short book, is about priorities.

Boda: *“The issue here is not the amount of resources available but rather the priorities of the people. They are concerned first with themselves and their own comfort and extravagance. This message is not saying that one*

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cannot enjoy the blessings of a home, but after two decades of inactivity at the temple site while homes were being built and beautified, the prophet identifies deficiencies in the priorities of the community.”

Baldwin: “Haggai listed no catalogue of gross sins. The Jews who returned to Jerusalem appear to have been law-abiding at this time, restrained still by continuing memories of the exile. What was lacking was dissatisfaction with things as they were, and the consequent drive to initiate action. Resignation killed faith. The ruined skeleton of the temple was like a dead body decaying in Jerusalem and making everything contaminated (2:10–14). How could the offence be removed? By a concerted effort to rebuild, which would be proof and pledge of a change of attitude from resignation to faith. Once priorities had been put right the presence of the Lord among them would be evident from the prosperity that would accompany both their building and their agriculture (2:9, 19).”

2. **What is our equivalent of re-building the temple?**

It is NOT the upgrade of our Ministry Facilities*.

It IS putting God first in all we do. Making His work our priorities.

Mackay: “To excuse their disinclination to exert themselves they were not saying, ‘No’, but ‘Not yet.’ But there is never a right time for engaging in the Lord’s work, if we are waiting for a time without problems. It is always possible to point to those who will hinder and oppose, and to the difficulties that will arise from lack of resources.”

NIV Life Application Bible on the whole of Haggai: “Although Haggai is a small book, it is filled with challenge and promise, reminding us of God’s claim on our lives and our priorities. As you read Haggai, imagine him walking the streets and alleys of Jerusalem, urging the people to get back to doing God’s work. And listen to Haggai speaking to you, urging you to reorder your priorities in accordance with God’s will. What has God told you to do? Put all else aside and obey him.”

Boda: “most Christians will encounter Haggai 1 at some point in their life, since it is often dusted off when a church initiates a building project. There is, of course, an easy link between building the temple and building a church. Often that hermeneutical swing does not take seriously the core values of this passage and makes the connection in a simplistic manner. Although this connection may be appropriate, it is important to keep the larger context in mind as the connection is made.”

Boda: “This passage, read in light of the New Testament’s redefinition of the temple as the Christian community, challenges it to release their resources for God’s kingdom work beyond the physical structures of a building and to reconsider funds invested in such structures.”

**But it could very well be about our attitude to this.*

For Next Week: Read Haggai 1:12-15

Study 2: HAGGAI 1:12-15

“The people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God”

Explore the Basics

Read the passage carefully together.

1. **Notice again the dating (v15). What is the difference in time from v1? Why so long?**

It is now twenty four days later so 21st Sept 520BC

All these messages are given in this same year the dates are

Hag. 1:1 29 Aug. 520

Hag. 1:15 21 Sept. 520

Hag. 2:1 17 Oct. 520

Hag. 2:10, 20 18 Dec. 520

Perhaps there was a need for the message to get around

OR they took time to get used to the idea.

OR they could have been preparing the materials.

Baldwin suggests: *“The sixth month was a month of harvesting, when urgent tasks in the orchards and fields would have to be completed.*

Twenty-three days would allow that work to be finished, after which every able-bodied man could be expected to report at the temple site.”

Alden is more positive: *“The date (v.15) indicates that hardly three weeks had passed from Haggai’s initial sermon to the people’s obedience to his orders. Perhaps those intervening weeks were spent in taking inventory of their supplies, assessing and assigning jobs, and completing plans. Then the actual construction resumed on this twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of Darius’s second year.”*

2. **What are the people called in v14? What were they called in v2? Why is this emphasis different?**

In v 14 they are called the ‘remnant of the people’ – a covenant term

In v2 they were called ‘these people’ – which has no sense of relationship.

At the start the words are a challenge and to some extent a judgement. But by v14 they have moved to obedience and openness to the Spirit of God.

Boda: *“When the people were mentioned at Hag. 1:2, they were referred to as “these people” (1:2), a somewhat derogatory appellation that revealed a distance in the relationship between God and the covenant people. Now, however, they are identified as the “remnant,” a term drawn from the prophetic tradition.”*

3. **Who provides the motivation for this work (v14)? Why is that significant?**

The motivation comes from the stirring up of the leaders and the people’s spirits by God.

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This shows that God is still at work in his people – he has commanded them and then he has empowered them to do His will.

Boda: *“This verb emphasizes God’s active role in moving the affections of his people to respond to the message. It reflects the vision of the new covenant seen in Jeremiah (Jer. 31–33), in which God not only writes the law on the hearts of the people (31:33) but even moves their affections (32:40).”*

4. **What is the comforting message in v13?**

The comfort is that the LORD (note the emphasis on this term in the verse) is ‘with them’

He says ‘I am with you’.

Significant here is the term ‘LORD’.

Boda: *“This phrase draws from a legacy of assurance by God to those who assume a task from his hand (see Ex. 3:12; Judg. 6:12; Jer. 1:8, 19). Interestingly, when David desires to build the first temple, Nathan the prophet said “for the LORD is with you” (2 Sam. 7:3). The same assurance is now given to another generation seeking to fulfill the passion of David.”*

Alden: *“The message itself is brief: “I am with you.” Few though they are, these words were comforting and encouraging to a people oppressed by enemies and depressed by failing crops. The Hebrew words are different from “Immanuel,” but their message is the same. Without God we can do nothing; with him all things are possible. By his divine aid this poor rabble could reconstruct a magnificent temple, repulse their enemies, seek and receive aid from an unbelieving monarch, and see dry ground bring forth food.”*

Pennant: *“Once they obeyed, a short message came from God to the people through Haggai. In view of the curse, they might have expected ‘I am against you’; instead, they heard God say I am with you. God’s curse is not a sign that God has rejected his people; rather, it shows his love for them. He wants to draw them back to him, and uses disaster to wake them up (Am. 4:6-11; cf. Am. 3:2; Is. 7:13-25, where Immanuel means ‘God with us’).”*

Deeper and Wider

1. **In verse 12 who is being obeyed? How do we know what God wants us to do?**

Ultimately it is the LORD (notice again how often this term is used in the verse)

Specifically it is

The voice of the LORD their God

And

The message of the prophet Haggai (because the Lord has sent him.)

We know what God wants us to do

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Boda: *“the proper response of God’s people is always obedience to his voice. This response is only possible because of a depth of covenant relationship with God, a relationship in which the people hear his word. Haggai’s message was accepted by a remnant that had open ears to hear. This obedience has two aspects: “fear” and “work.”*

2. **“I am with you”(v13). Look at Genesis 26:24; Exodus 33:14; Joshua 3:7; Isaiah 43:5; Jeremiah 46:28; Matthew 28:20. What does it mean that ‘God is with us?’ Does it mean freedom from all troubles?**

The verses:

Genesis 26:24 That night the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham.”

Exodus 33:14 The LORD replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

Joshua 3:7 And the LORD said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses.

Isaiah 43:5 Do not be afraid, for I am with you;

I will bring your children from the east
and gather you from the west.

Jeremiah 46:28 Do not fear, O Jacob my servant,
for I am with you,” declares the LORD.

“Though I completely destroy all the nations
among which I scatter you,
I will not completely destroy you.

I will discipline you but only with justice;

I will not let you go entirely unpunished.”

Matthew 28:20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

It means an awful lot.

God’s presence is the assurance of his support.

Baldwin: *“Once the people had registered their intention of carrying out Haggai’s instructions they received the encouraging word I am with you, says the Lord. So God endorses and strengthens our good resolves.”*

His absence is a sign of judgment.

Mackay: *“... is a message addressed to those who are within the bond of faith, assuring them of God’s favour and the reality of divine reconciliation. The God who is with them is also the God who is for them, and so they may find courage.*

Pennant: “Similarly, God’s Spirit is not driven off by his people’s sin, or at least not for long (see 1 Sa. 4:22; 6). In Ezekiel’s visions, the glory of God finally left Jerusalem due to wickedness in the temple, but only to go to the exiles in Babylon. (Cf. Ezk. 10:18-22; 11:22-23 with Ezk. 1:1; 11:16.) Now the people are reassured that God’s Spirit has returned from Babylon with them, to stay. This reassurance is for all who earnestly seek God’s presence and obey his commands (Jas. 4:8).”

3. **What does it mean that ‘the people feared the Lord’? Given the message of v1-11 what sort of fear is this?**

I take it that fear here is essentially reverence for God. What fear means in the rest of Scripture.

BUT there must also be for these people a fearful concern for the continued consequences of disobedience.

Mackay: “The expression here is not the usual one, but rather ‘feared before the Lord’ which indicates consternation and fright. ... On this occasion it might have arisen from their consciences being smitten by awareness of their former lapses.”

4. **The idea of the ‘remnant’ is very important. Look at Ezra 9:13-15; Isaiah 10:21-22; 11:11-16; Micah 2:12; 7:18; Romans 11:5. Who now are the ‘remnant’ of God’s people?**

The idea of a remnant is a small surviving group of people who are still loyal to God. A faithful few.

They are first of all those who chose to return to the promised land (while many decide to stay in the relative security and prosperity of Babylon) and then later the faithful among them.

Mackay: “It had become a standard way for the prophets to refer to the faithful nucleus who were left after the judgement of the LORD. ... It was not quite the same as those who returned from Babylon. There were others who had never left the land.

Baldwin: “The ‘remnant’ theme had been especially characteristic of Isaiah’s prophecy. In the temple vision he was warned of destruction, which only a small proportion would survive (Isa. 6:11–13), and his son’s name, Shear-jashub (meaning ‘a remnant shall return’), became a motif in his preaching (Isa. 7:3; 10:21; 11:11). Both Haggai and Zechariah recognized in the small group of repatriated Jews fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy, but more was required of them than mere physical presence in the land if they were to fulfil Isaiah’s hopes.”

The remnant now are those belong to the kingdom through Jesus. Paul in Romans is applying this idea to the Christians among the Jews.

Boda: “As the church is born in Acts 2, it is described as the remnant community that has been purified and on whom rests God’s Spirit.

Elsewhere in the New Testament, the church is pictured as the recipients of the new covenant through Christ (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6;

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Heb. 8:6; 9:15). As the “remnant,” the community of Christ needs to replicate the qualities of covenant faithfulness depicted in Haggai 1:12–15, that is, to stand in awe before God and respond in obedience to his Word as they pursue Christ’s kingdom.”

Boda: *“The concept of the remnant assumes both continuity and discontinuity with the community of old. A remnant is a portion that remains and assumes that formerly there was a community from which the portion was taken. A remnant, however, is only a portion, and although bearing similarities with the whole it becomes a new entity. As the prophets develop the theme of the remnant in the Old Testament, they show that God’s promises remain intact, but that they will be fulfilled through a purified community, the remnant.”*

Apply

1. **What should we do with the word of the LORD? Read James 1:22-25.**

We should hear the word AND obey it.

Boda: “James 1:22–25 echoes this concern: Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

James’s instruction is not to discontinue listening to God’s Word, but rather to look “intently” and continue to “do this.” Notice how he reflects the message of Haggai by linking such obedience to blessings from God.

This teaching of James is especially appropriate for those who have been Christians for an extended period of time. One of the core values of the church is the preaching and teaching of God’s Word (e.g., Acts 2:41; Eph. 4:11–16; 1 Tim. 4:11–16). However, it is easy for regular parishioners’ (let alone pastors’) knowledge of that Word to exceed the appropriation of that Word in their life. This should affect our patterns as individuals and churches. It may be better for us to focus on fewer experiences in the Word followed by longer reflection on its implications for lives and godliness than to quickly move ahead to the next passage in our journey through the Bible. The danger is to become used to listening to the Word without responding in actions, to feed the intellect without moving the affections and impacting the will.

2. **Are we open to God ‘stirring up’ our spirit to love and serve Him?**

For discussion.

For Next Week: Read Haggai 2:1-9

Study 3: HAGGAI 2:1-9

“But Now Be Strong ... Do Not Fear”

Explore the Basics

Read the passage carefully together.

Boda: “THE EVENTS IN HAGGAI 1 took place in the sixth month with the initial prophetic message coming on the first day and the response on the twenty-fourth day. The message of 2:1–9 is thus delivered almost a month after the beginning of the work. The date in our calendar is October 17, 520 B.C. It is not surprising that after a month of rebuilding the people are discouraged, especially since the initial phase of clearing rubble would be extremely arduous. But there are further reasons why on this particular day the frustration of the people reaches a crescendo. ... the lack of progress on the project coupled with the enormity of the task yet to come may have been accentuated by the frustration of celebrating a third festal event in the unsightly ruins.”

1. **How much time has passed? What now is the issue here?**

We are now at the 21st day of the seventh month. This would correspond to 17th October 520BC.

The issue is the re-built temple seems rather ‘sub-standard’ compared to the one they are replacing.

All these messages are given in this same year the dates are

Hag. 1:1	29 Aug. 520
Hag. 1:15	21 Sept. 520
Hag. 2:1	17 Oct. 520
Hag. 2:10, 20	18 Dec. 520

Baldwin on v3: *“The revered elders who remembered the temple before its destruction must often have spoken nostalgically of its splendour. Some of them no doubt took part in the abortive attempt to rebuild in 538 BC (Ezra 3:8–13). Past disappointment was making them gloomy about the present and future. The new temple would never be like the old; they had no resources to pay skilled craftsmen from abroad, as Solomon had done, and they could not begin to think of covering the interior with gold (1 Kgs 6:21, 22). In spite of the work they had already put in there was nothing to show for it. Unfavourable comparison between the present and the past undermined all incentive to persevere.”*

Boda: *“The date of this prophetic message corresponds to another important event in the history of Israel. It was during this festival over four centuries earlier that Solomon dedicated the temple (1 Kings 8:2). The many allusions to this great Solomonic temple in this prophetic message show clearly that Haggai and his people have this event in mind, so that comparisons with the earlier project may have led to*

discouragement. In other words, as God's people are overwhelmed by their external circumstances and their internal expectations, Haggai is moved to deliver his second oracle."

2. **How are the people's concerns addressed?**

They are (both the leaders and the people) assured that their covenant keeping God is with them.

And are encouraged to 'be strong' v 4

Boda: *"In summary, the central imperative is "to work," with the assumption that this work is on the temple project. It is surrounded by two imperatives often used to motivate God's people to a great task expressed in the positive ("be strong") and the negative ("do not fear")."*

Baldwin: *"'Be strong' (AV, RV; take courage, RSV) was the command repeated many times to the earlier Joshua (Deut. 31:7; Josh. 1:6, 7, 9, 18) and to Israel (Deut. 31:6; Josh. 10:25), as they went into the land for the first time." ... "There is a striking parallel between Haggai's exhortation and the words of Jesus in Mark 6:50, 'Take heart, it is I; have no fear.' The personal presence of the Lord gives courage, determination, and the conviction that he will not permit his cause to fail. If the exile had seemed to annul the covenant, here was the sure word that, just as God had been present with his people during all the events of the exodus (Exod. 29:45), so he was with them still by his Spirit."*

3. **In v 9 what is God's promise? What confidence can God's people have about this?**

God's promise is that the glory of this seemingly inferior Temple will be greater.

Boda: *"One should not miss in the English translation that this does not refer to two different houses (former and present houses), but rather to two different glories of the same house: "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former."28 To a people discouraged by the intimidating goal of matching the Solomonic temple, this promise would engender hope."*

The confidence of the people rests on the character of God. He keeps his covenants v5, he controls the nations v7, all the wealth is His v8.

Alden: *"Having brought the very problem of discouragement into focus, Haggai next offered the divine antidote: "Be strong ... be strong ... be strong ... and work. For I am with you" (v.4). Notice the same imperative thrice repeated—to Zerubbabel, to Joshua, and to all the people. Notice also the threefold repetition of the formula "declares the LORD." The problem was essentially one of attitude. So the primary command was to take courage. When the people did that, the command to "work" would be fulfilled quite naturally. For the Lord to have only said "work" without giving assurances would have been inadequate motivation. These people did not need to be whipped but encouraged not cudgelled but made*

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optimistic. The most uplifting thing they or anyone could hear was that God was with them.”

Baldwin: *“The latter splendour of this house shall be greater than the former’ was literally true under the Herods (Mark 13:1), but chiefly because the Lord of the temple came (Matt. 12:6) and superseded it (John 2:13–22).”*

4. **In v6-7 what does God say He is going to do?**

He says he will ‘shake’ the nations and that this shaking will bring the wealth of the nations to God’s house.

God is the controller of the nations.

Mackay: *“I will shake all nations’ envisages an upsetting of the political and social structures that the nations had put in place by their own power and wisdom, and which they thought would last. When they have served their God-ordained purpose, it will be an easy matter for him to thrust them aside and to reverse the flow of history.”*

Baldwin: *“A demonstration of this occurred about this time. Opponents who hoped to bring the building to a halt were ordered to pay in full the cost of the temple from the royal revenue in their own taxation district (Ezra 6:8–12). This financial provision probably arrived just after Haggai’s daring claim that their God owned all wealth and would meet their need. Later Herod the Great and his successors were to lavish wealth on the temple.”*

The once more may refer to his shaking of the nations which brought them into conflict and which then ended up with the people of God being taken into captivity in Babylon.

But now the shaking will benefit Israel.

Boda: *“The material glory of the nations did flow into Darius’s coffers, and these were directed to the work on the temple (Ezra 5–6; see esp. 6:6–8, 13–14). Haggai’s description of this event does not portray the specific means by which this event will take place, but it does identify Yahweh as the ultimate cause as he controls the affairs of the nations.”*

Boda: *“In sum, Haggai calls a disgruntled and discouraged community to work with renewed strength and without paralysing fear. But the promise of the presence and action of the Lord Almighty consumes the majority of the passage and provides them the hope to finish the project. His message speaks with sensitivity to the immediate generation, promising God’s presence with them as they face the greatest challenge of their lives. At the same time, he calls them to trace God’s hand in their present, seeing how he remains in sovereign charge of the affairs of the nations and is already beginning to place the treasures of the nations at their disposal.”*

Deeper and Wider

1. **What are God’s concerns in this message?**

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God is concerned for his relationship with his people. Now that they have obediently begun the temple restoration he is concerned to assure them of his presence and his blessing.

God's other concern is his concern for all the world. This is expressed in the reference to the nations and their attitude toward the temple.

2. **Read Hebrews 12:25-29. What use does this make of our Haggai passage?**

You really need to have a bit of a look at Hebrews 12 from verse 14 on. It is worth noting that in both the Haggai and the Hebrews passage there is a close link in the context with the events of the Exodus. For there too the LORD had shaken the 'heavens and the earth'

In Hebrews the writer is exhorting his readers to stand firm, not concerned by the shaking but looking forward to God's final intervention when his kingdom that cannot be shaken will be realised finally.

3. **What part does God's action in the past play in this passage?**

As in so many places the returned Israelites are encouraged to look back, to the Exodus (v5) and the glory of Solomon's temple (v3), to consider this God who in spite of disobedience and unfaithfulness among his people is completely faithful to his promises to his people.

As people of the New Testament we also look back to the death and resurrection of Jesus as guarantees of the victory to come.

4. **What is meant by 'peace' (shalom)? How is it brought into being?**

In v9 the ultimate goal of all this is expressed as 'peace' granted by God. It is helpful for us as Christians to understand the full sense of the Hebrew word 'shalom' which is translated 'peace'.

It is much much more than a mere absence of conflict. It speaks of a settled and well ordered existence. Being in the centre of God's grace for us. The New Testament concept of deep joy is somewhat analogous.

The letters in the New Testament bring this idea to bear when the writer wishes his readers 'grace and peace' in the opening salutations.

Alden: *"Most Christian commentators see in this verse, too, a messianic reference. The second temple was to be honoured by the presence of Christ, a divine presence quite different from the Shekinah of the OT. The latter part of v.9 bears this out."*

Apply

1. **When you are challenged and discouraged where do you look? Where should you look?**

For discussion.

Boda: *"Haggai's message needs to permeate the depth of our beings as the people of God, both individually and corporately. It is tempting to live in step with the prevailing culture of our time, a culture that has insulated itself from all threats of defeat or failure. But to live in step with the God*

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of Haggai is to place oneself in the dangerous position of trusting in God, to grasp the hand of the Creator and Redeemer of the universe.”

2. **“Be strong ... Do not fear”. Why are these commands important?**

Somewhat addressed above.

Needs discussion for what these mean in our context in our century.

Boda: *“Haggai immediately moves behind the symptom (lack of work) to the internal motivations of the people: “Be strong and do not fear.”*

Haggai’s message moves beyond external duty to the kingdom to the inner core attitudes essential for sustained commitment to the kingdom. He does not command duty for the sake of duty; rather, he moves to the heart where passion for the kingdom is fostered.”

For Next Week: Read Haggai 2:10-19

Study 4: HAGGAI 2:10-19

“From This Day on I will Bless You”

Explore the Basics

Read the passage carefully together.

Baldwin: “Before Haggai develops more fully his vision for the future he recapitulates his earlier sermon (1:2–11). He looks back (2:10–18) in order to lay stress on the complete change that will be observable from the very day on which he is speaking. In order to be precise he supplies the date. Every one of the prophet’s hearers will have such a successful season on his farm that it will be obvious that God is blessing.”

1. **Again what is the date here?**

We are now two months and 3 days after the last oracle. 18th Dec 520BC. I know you must be a bit sick of talking about the dates but they are significant here. Haggai makes a great point of recording them and God has preserved them for our reading. There is something here about God’s call and our response and that God is not slow to respond even though men may be. Remember this all takes place in a matter of four months. Work continues on the Temple. – This appears to be a sort of foundation stone laying day or something like that (v18). This and the next message are given on the same day.

All these messages are given in this same year the dates are

Hag. 1:1	29 Aug. 520
Hag. 1:15	21 Sept. 520
Hag. 2:1	17 Oct. 520
Hag. 2:10, 20	18 Dec. 520

2. **What is the point of the parable in v10-14?**

The point is about people and holiness.

Basically the holiness does not ‘rub off’ but defiledness does.

Mackay: “The Temple was not a good luck charm that automatically transmitted holiness. Each activity had to be assessed on the basis of the Lord’s covenant standards for His people. Only in that way could his approval be assured. To know the fullness of God’s blessing they must ensure that there is not sinful corruption spreading its contagion throughout all their efforts. Whoever would stand in the holy place must ensure that he has clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3-4).”

The warning is to the people is to abstain from sinfulness as it is all pervading.

Baldwin: “Haggai’s question is not asking for information, but is a methodological device familiar to every teacher. The exchange of question and answer arouses and sustains interest. Holy flesh became ‘holy’ by being set apart to fulfil a sacrificial purpose. The animal used

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for a sin offering was 'most holy' (Lev. 6:25). At the end of a Nazirite vow part of the ram of the peace offering, together with tokens from the meal offering, was waved as a gesture of presentation to the Lord, 'a holy portion for the priest' (Num. 6:20). Such holy portions must frequently have been carried in the robes of the priests. According to Leviticus 6:27 the garment itself would be holy, but holiness would not be passed on from the garment to anything it might touch. By contrast ritual defilement was passed on by contact, like a contagious disease (Lev. 11:28; 22:4-7). The application is twofold. (i) Israel had originally been set apart for the Lord and was therefore holy (Exod. 19:6), but (ii) the nation had been defiled, and everything it touched, including its offerings, became unclean. The ruined temple, a witness to sins of negligence, stood like a corpse in the midst. How could the defilement be purged away if every offering was itself defiled?"

3. **What earlier part of the prophecy is referred to in v15-19?**

This all refers back to chapter one and the list of consequences of the peoples disobedience and complacency there.

Boda: "Three times in this speech Haggai says, "give careful thought" (2:15, 18), echoing Haggai's initial speech to the people in 1:5, 7 (which also reflected on past agricultural curses). Here, however, "to your ways" is missing after "give careful thought" because the reflection is not exclusively on the past (as in Hag. 1) but on the future as well."

4. **Why repeat the date in v18? What point is this part (v15-19) of the message making? What is the contrast?**

The new information here is that this is the day that the Temple foundation was laid.

This part of the message is to encourage the people to keep on, keeping on.

The contrast is in v19 – God's blessing is theirs from now on.

Boda: "Ephesians 1:3 says that the Father has "blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ," including such blessings as adoption as his children (1:5), redemption through his blood (1:7), forgiveness of sins (1:7), knowledge of his will (1:9), and sealing by the Holy Spirit (1:13). These foundational blessings that mark us as the people of the new covenant, however, are just the beginning of the kind of blessing that God promises us. At its core, blessing is the communication of the life of the Creator to us (cf. Gen. 1:28-30 with 3:14-19)."

Baldwin: "Having looked back, Haggai now looks ahead 'from this day onward.' He makes a solemn declaration, dated with the precision of a legal document, that the newly-sown seed will yield abundantly. 'Since the day that the foundation ... was laid.' Once again Haggai sees the rebuilding of the temple as the event of crucial importance."

Deeper and Wider

1. **Read Matthew 23: 23-28. What does Jesus have to say about true cleanliness?**

It is what is inside that matters,

2. **What does v14 have to say about God's attitude to sacrifices? See also 1 Sam. 15:22–23; Ps. 40:6–8; 51:16–17; Prov. 21:3; Isa. 1:10–20; Jer. 7:21–26; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21–27; Mic. 6:6–8.**

Lots of verses here but with one message, the heart's attitude is more important than the hand's actions in regard to sacrifices (indeed all actions of 'worship').

Alden: *"So the priests correctly answered yes to Haggai's question. With v.14 comes the interpretation of this little dialogue. The Lord declared, "So it is with this people and this nation." The dilatory attitude of what may have been only a few had infected and influenced the majority, and the temple rebuilding program had ground to a standstill. The selfish attitude of putting personal comforts first had spread throughout the repatriated community. The people had encouraged one another to build their own houses and to wait for more propitious times to work on rebuilding God's house. When attitudes are wrong, nothing given to God is really acceptable. So the last part of v.14 charges that whatever these people offered was likewise defiled. From early times it was quite clear that God wanted sincere worship first and performance of the cult second. He basically wanted hearts, not hands. He desired obedience rather than sacrifice. That order of things was not changed in postexilic times, and it has not changed today. God still wants us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matt 6:33), and he still issues a solemn warning against deviation: "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many" (Heb 12:15)."*

3. **How does the New Testament see sacrifice? See Hebrews 9:23-28; Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 2:17; 2 Timothy 4:6; 1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 6:9; Philippians 4:18; Hebrews 13:15; Revelation. 5:8; 8:3; Heb. 13:16; Phil. 2:17.**

The sacrifice the New Testament demands of God's people is simple: ALL OF YOU, ALL THE TIME.

This is because Jesus is the 'once for all' sacrifice in the shedding of blood sense.

Boda: *"New Testament fulfillment of sacrifice follows the trajectory set by these two Old Testament aspects. On the one side, the sacrifice of Jesus is seen as the once-for-all atoning sacrifice that enables a relationship with God (Heb. 9–10). On the other side, we are encouraged to offer our lives (Rom. 12:1–2; Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6; 1 Peter 2:5; Rev. 6:9), our gifts (Phil. 4:18), our worship (Heb. 13:15; Rev. 5:8; 8:3), our acts of kindness*

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(Heb. 13:16), and our faith (Phil. 2:17) as sacrifices that foster this covenant relationship founded on Christ's sacrifice."

4. **Boda refers to v15-19 as 'From Past Curse to Future Blessing through Present Obedience'. Discuss? How does this relate to the Gospel?**

Could well be the theme of the whole book.

Alden: *"At the very end of this little sermon comes this promise: "From this day on I will bless you" (v.19). In the past it was touch and go; there was considerable uncertainty whether the supplies could be stretched to the next harvest. While the people were putting themselves first, they suffered the agonies of drought and consequent famine. But when they put the Lord first, they began to enjoy his blessing on the fruitfulness of the soil. Our view of God's economy must not degenerate into one of crass materialism. Many people do not hear God till he touches them where it hurts. This was merely one way God chose to remind the people of his sovereignty over them. He who was concerned with the temple was also in control of the rains. He insists on having first place."*

The Gospel relates to our sin (past curse) removed by Jesus death and looks forward to his triumphant return to take us to be with him forever (future blessing) and calls on us to live a Christ like life in the meantime (present obedience)

Interesting to contemplate these things as related to Faith, Hope, Love.

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Apply

1. **What ‘blessing’ (v19) do we think we deserve? Or do we deserve something else?**

We deserve something else – Judgment.

God, through Jesus gives us the blessings of forgiveness, redemption, salvation, reconciliation, sanctification

Boda: “The New Testament echoes these two theological aspects as Christ promises material and spiritual blessing to his followers and yet also expects suffering as a key feature of the life of discipleship. Both Old and New Testament believers, then, could and can expect that their acts of obedience will result in blessing either in this life or the next, while remaining aware that such acts may be greeted with suffering”

2. **What is the blessing we have in Jesus?**

Being put right with God.

Note 2 Corinthians 4:17

For Next Week: Read Haggai 2:20-23

Study 5: HAGGAI 2:20-23

“For I have Chosen You”

Explore the Basics

It would be good at this stage to read Haggai right through together.

Boda: “Haggai 2:10–23 functions as a positive encouragement for the people, affirming their decision to move forward in the rebuilding project and to lay the foundation of the temple. This encouragement is offered by comparing the dismal past with the promised future, linking blessing to the obedient response of the people. This future blessing is ultimately linked to the reestablishment of the royal house represented by Zerubbabel, who becomes a symbol of hope for the community of God.”

Baldwin: “Haggai’s last recorded word is addressed to an individual, Zerubbabel, the Davidic prince. In traditional eschatological language he presents a new phase of world history, when thrones will fall before neighbouring armies, and Zerubbabel will become God’s chosen man of the hour. It is natural to assume that Haggai (and Zechariah) expected this new age to dawn in their own time as a result of the upheavals at the beginning of the reign of Darius. As time passed, and Zerubbabel was not honoured as had been expected, the messianic hopes were transferred to his descendants. As the writer to the Hebrews realized there was an important principle, amply illustrated in the Old Testament story, in the deferment of the promise (Heb. 11:13). Zerubbabel might have been added to the list of those who by faith looked longingly for its fulfilment.”

1. **What has been the main thrust of Haggai thus far?**

Would be good to discuss group members’ personal impressions first. The quote discussed last week is then, possibly, a good starting point. ‘From Past Curse to Future Blessing through Present Obedience’
Otherwise you could consider the headings we have had so far:

“Give careful thought to your ways”

“The people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God”

“But Now Be Strong ... Do Not Fear”

“From This Day on I will Bless You”

“For I have Chosen You”

These are short snippets of verses from each of the passages.

Baldwin: “Haggai was a man of one message. He represented the God whom he loved to call the Lord of hosts, the source of all power, the controller of armies, on earth and in heaven (see Additional note on ‘the Lord of hosts’, p. 46). It followed that his word had authority; the weather obeyed his commands (1:11); the whole universe was in his grasp and would one day be shaken by his hand (2:6, 21). This same God was

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consistent in his dealings with men. Though they disregarded him, he never gave them up. When they failed to fulfil his will he made life hard for them so that they would seek him (1:5). When they committed themselves to his service he took pleasure in the fact and was glorified (1:8). He changed men's attitudes (1:14) and by his Spirit abode among them (2:5). He would transform the work they did for him, and cause the nations to supply gifts of gold and silver, all of which belonged to him by right (2:8).'

Alden: *"The brief record of Haggai's ministry does, however, show him as a man of conviction. He has the unique place among the prophets of having been really listened to and his words obeyed. The people did what he preached, and in a mere four years the temple was complete. Though his words were plain and not poetic, he had one major point to make; and he made it forcefully and well."*

2. **What is the thrust of this passage? Who will benefit?**

Important to note the date again. (Yes AGAIN!!) This is a second message on the day of the laying of the temple foundation.

All these messages are given in this same year the dates are

Hag. 1:1	29 Aug. 520
Hag. 1:15	21 Sept. 520
Hag. 2:1	17 Oct. 520
Hag. 2:10, 20	18 Dec. 520

The thrust is that God is going to restore the fortunes of his nation Israel through his mighty actions. – God will bless as he has promised he will bless.

Baldwin: *"This assurance of the Lord's present salvation and future purpose pervades Haggai's message and marks him out as a genuine prophet. The bare walls of the present temple he can see clothed with the silver and gold presented by the nations (2:7–9). Zerubbabel the temple builder is the coming Davidic ruler, or at least his representative in the contemporary scene (2:21–23). God's universal kingdom, in which the warring nations find their peace in capitulating to him (2:22; cf. 7–9), is the ultimate goal of history, but Haggai sees it beginning in his own time as personal and community affairs are submitted to God's rule."*

Boda: *"The audience of this message is clearly defined from the outset as Zerubbabel, the political ruler of the province (see the introduction, Original Meaning section). As the message progresses, however, this designation will be left to the side as Haggai unfolds the significance of this character to the future of God's people in 2:23"*

3. **What does God tell Zerubbabel he is going to do to the nations?**

In v21-22 God again asserts his dominion over 'the nations. The foreign kingdoms will come to naught.

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Boda: *“In the end God causes such confusion in his enemies that ironically they are the ones who enact judgment on themselves, confirming the ineptitude of human political power and military prowess.”*

Baldwin: *“The prophet uses traditional vocabulary for God’s miraculous intervention. As at the exodus horses, chariots and riders will ‘go down’ (Exod. 15:1, 5); kingdoms will be ‘overthrown’ as were Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut. 29:23; Isa. 13:19; Jer. 20:16; Amos 4:11); men will fall ‘every one by the sword of his fellow’ (Judg. 7:22; Ezek. 38:21, Zech. 14:13). The fact that Judah is small and defenceless makes no difference when God says ‘I will overthrow.’ He will act, and Judah will not need to fight.”*

Baldwin: *“The shaking of the heavens and the earth would not only be a signal for the nations to bring their wealth (2:7–9), but also an indication that the last days had come.”*

Boda: *“Whereas in 2:6–9 the disruption of the cosmos began a process that ultimately resulted in the wealth of the nations streaming into the temple, in 2:21–22 the same disruption ultimately leads to the subjugation of the nations.”*

4. **What will happen ‘on that day’?**

Boda: *“This phrase also serves to delineate the time reference for the actions described in 2:21–23. It is used regularly in prophetic literature as the prophets look to a future time of fulfillment (e.g., Isa. 2:11–20; Jer. 25:33; Amos 8:3, 9) and is intimately linked to the eschatological time called the “Day of Yahweh.””*

Something special will happen to Zerubbabel or around Zerubbabel.

Deeper and Wider

1. **Who is Zerubbabel? Who or what does he represent?**

Zerubbabel is in the present political context the Governor of Judah under the rule of the Persian King Darius.

BUT Zerubbabel is also of the line of David, the line of the Kings of Israel.

And Zerubbabel is ‘my servant’ says God.

This Zerubbabel is represents God’s covenant with David and Israel.

Alden: *“God’s promise is expanded in v.23 to include Zerubbabel. Notice that he was not called by his title of “governor” (cf. 1:1, 14; 2:2, 21) but by the title “my servant.” This was Isaiah’s favorite designation of the Messiah (41:8; 42:1; 49:5-6; 50:10, 52:13; 53:11). Also, the word “chosen” recalls references to the chosen people and the chosen One from among those people (cf. 1 Kings 11:13; 1 Chronicles 28:4; Neh 9:7; Ps 135:4; Isa 42:1; Zech 1:17; et al.). This promise to Zerubbabel must*

be understood messianically, for the Persians simply would not tolerate a man laying claim to the promises here stated. Zerubbabel was no more the Messiah than Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, or Isaiah. But Zerubbabel was in the genealogy of Christ (cf. Matt 1:12-13)."

Baldwin: "Zerubbabel is not only governor (verse 21) but also 'my servant', a title used of David (Ezek. 34:23; 37:24) and prominent in Isaiah 40-55. Moreover, 'servant' and 'chosen' are in juxtaposition in Isaiah 41:8; 42:1; 44:1."

2. **What does God say he is going to do for Zerubbabel? Why does this matter?**

God says he is going to make Zerubbabel like His 'signet ring', a symbol of His authority.

It matters because it ties all of this to the God's covenant, his promise to His people.

Boda: "*But 2:20–23 shows us that this promise of blessing in the immediate future is but the firstfruits of a far greater blessing. Yahweh will shake the universe, overthrow human power, and appoint the Davidic line to its rightful place as vice-regent over the world.*"

Mackay notes: "*It was through Jeremiah just over a decade before Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar, that the Lord announced, 'Even if you, Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off' (Jeremiah 22:24). The Lord had told Jehoiachin that even though he had been as precious and important as such a signet ring, he would still be handed over to Nebuchadnezzar, and die in exile. Now, in a reversal of that divine rejection, the Lord reveals to Zerubbabel that he is reinstated in favour and that he (and the line of promise that he represented) would be looked after with divine care.*"

3. **Who is the one who is in control right through the 'story' of Haggai?**

The answer is easy – GOD.

It is worth considering though this stage of Israel's history for with only a 'remnant' returned from Babylon, with the Persian calling the shots, with threats all around (see Ezra-Nehemiah), and a devastated city and no autonomy, and little, it seems, will to proceed, it seems God's control is tenuous.

The message of Haggai is that these appearances are deceiving.

Boda: "*In one sense this passage has been fulfilled in the arrival of Christ in the line of David and his ascension to his heavenly throne. In another sense it remains unfulfilled as we await the final arrival of this Davidic ruler in the last days. We must, of course, admit that we live in a radically different era from that of God's people in Haggai's day; at the same time, however, our posture is similar as we await the final consummation of God's rule through Jesus.*"

4. **Discuss the thing that has impacted you most about the prophecy of Haggai?**

For discussion.

Apply

1. **Jesus is the ultimate ‘Zerubbabel’. How should we respond to him?**

For discussion.

Tennant: *“In addition to any fulfilment of God’s promise to Zerubbabel which may have taken place in his lifetime, it has been felt that Joshua and Zerubbabel together foreshadow the Messiah, God’s chosen leader who receives his authority (Dn. 7:13-14). God delights in those who obey him, and loves to be close to them, but he withdraws his blessing from the disobedient (1 Sa. 15:22-23; Mk. 1:11; Jn. 4:34).”*

2. **Are you ready for ‘that day’?**

For discussion.

Alden: *“So the Book of Haggai, which began on such a discouraging and depressing note, ends on an uplifting and promising one. Haggai’s first message was one of indictment; his last one is of a great and blessed future for the people of God. As we now know, that future was much further away than either Haggai or Zerubbabel thought. But in the mind of God, it is as close and certain as tomorrow’s rising sun.*

“Baldwin: *“Haggai continues to call God’s people to zealous service. Half-hearted allegiance is no allegiance. To think that any time will do to become serious about his cause is to fail him completely. He is waiting to bless, but he cannot do so while his people are apathetic and self-centred. Moreover, in this mood they experience only shortfall, whereas he wants to shower them with good things. Haggai’s remedy for today, as for his own day, is a church mobilized for action, to which he would say, ‘Take courage, work, fear not.’ God’s future purpose will be achieved and will prove to be more glorious in fulfilment than in prospect by the degree to which Jesus Christ was more glorious than the temple.”*

In the Next Week: Read Haggai right through again.