

# Haggai

Bible Study

## Timeline of Judah's history

586 BC

Jerusalem and temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon  
The Jews taken captive to Babylon

539 BC

Babylon falls to Medo-Persian Empire (Dan. 5: 1-28)

538 BC Cyrus' (Persia) Decree—(Ezra 1:1)

Jews return to land of Judah to begin to rebuild temple

Foundation of temple laid...but opposition sets in (Ezra 4: 4-5)  
Opposition: Samaritans

16 years construction stops

521 BC

Darius begins rule of Persia

➤ Issues decree for construction on temple to continue

520 BC (Ezra 5:1)

Haggai and Zechariah preach—exhorting Jews to resume work on temple  
(Haggai 1:1)

# Background to book of

## Haggai

Haggai means: “festal one”  
The first of the post captivity prophets

Preached after Judah returned from captivity in Babylon

Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther refer to the same period in history of Judah

- Remnant returns
- Feasts were reinstated
- Foundation of the new temple was laid

Then the work on the temple stopped:

1. Hostile neighbors
2. Indifference among the Jews

Haggai and Zechariah sent to exhort the Jews to resume work on the temple

Book begins with theme of rebuilding the temple

Goes on to talk about the shaking of all nations  
(prophetic)

Addresses the coming of the Lord

Finishes describing the millennial reign

The book covers four months of time

Four messages in the book...each indicated  
by a date

Exhortation to build the temple also applies **to us** today—individually and as a  
Church

Exhortations to “**consider**” (examine themselves)...applies to us as Unleavened  
Bread approaches

## Chapter 1

Verse 1 (First message: reproof and warning)

“Sixth month” (about our September)...520 BC

Addresses leaders first:

Zerubbabel—civil leader/ Joshua—high priest

Also intended for the whole nation...as the context shows

Zerubbabel—appointed governor of  
Judea by Cyrus

Joshua—son of the high priest at the time  
of the Babylonian invasion

Verse 2  
Begins by rebuking **the people's  
indifference**

**“this people”**  
(not ‘my people’)...God’s displeasure

The people’s excuse:  
The time had not come (an attitude)

1. Putting off the work of God (to build the temple)
2. Too busy with their own affairs

Verse 3  
God’s response through Haggai

Verse 4  
Beautifying their own homes but not working on the temple

“paneled houses”—luxuriously fitted...walls and ceilings (wainscoting with cedar)  
People reflecting attitude of selfishness, indifference and ingratitude

“the temple to lie in ruins”—God’s work was put aside

The temple—the dwelling place for God

Through God’s spirit he dwelt in Solomon’s temple

Today: **the temple** of God—is his people...in which he resides through the Holy Spirit

(Eph. 2: 19-22) (I Cor. 3: 16-17) (I Tim. 3: 15)

The message in the book of Haggai has a lot to say to Christians today:

God is in the process **of building** his spiritual temple **today**

Each of us as individuals are considered his temple

(I Cor. 6: 19-20)

Verse 5

“Consider your ways”= Where is your heart fixed?

A command to examine themselves

We are to be growing and overcoming with God’s help to be the kind of temple God wants us to be...

Unleavened Bread and self examination

Verse 6

Not completely blessed

Because of their indifference to building the temple

Their efforts produce little results:  
Hole in the pocket—money goes out

Verse 7

“Consider your ways” (repeated):

Examine yourself—think about what is going wrong

People's effort **not blessed**...because of their failure to honor and obey God:

They did not **put God first** (Matthew 6: 33)

Verse 8

God tells the people what to do: build my house...and it will go better for you

Because you will be putting him first

God said to them:  
**"build the temple"**

Are you building your temple (spiritually)?

Putting God first

**"that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified"**

God would be honored in the worship of his people...through their obedience

Verse 9

“Looked for much...came to little”

➤ Reflects back to verse 6: “sown much but reaped little”

“runs to his own house”—but neglected God

“runs”—shows a zeal to do their own interests

“I blew upon it”= not blessed

Not blessed: because they neglected God and pursued their own interests

Verse 10

No blessings from God (the dew)

“no fruit”—famine for disobedience (Lev. 16: 19-20)

Verse 11

Maybe drought would wake them up

Verse 12-15

Haggai’s message takes effect...the people changed their ways

### Verse 12

They “obeyed God”

- The fear of God motivated them
- They renewed the work on the temple

### Haggai:

One of the few prophets in the Bible whose message was heeded positively

### Verse 13

“I am with you”

- God’s promise because of their repentance

“I am with you”

- We need God in our spiritual ventures

### Verse 14

God himself stirred up their  
recommitment

They were inspired to build

### Verse 15 (520 BC)

Work resumes 3 weeks and 2 days after  
Haggai began his message

## Chapter 2

Verse 1 (Second message): Exhortation and encouragement

Given on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the Feast of Tabernacles

(During the Feast of Tabernacles Solomon dedicated the first temple)

Verse 2

Messages of exhortation and encouragement to **the leaders and the people**

Verse 3 (Disappointment had set in)

New temple not as beautiful as Solomon's  
New one was inferior to the old one

(Ezra 3: 12-13) Those who remember Solomon's temple wept

People can reflect on Church today that way (not the same as before)

Our own spiritual condition (not the way I used to be)

Haggai's message had brought the problem of discouragement into focus

Verse 4 (God's antidote)

(This temple is not as good)... "but be strong" ... "I am with you"...(do the work)

Threefold repetition in this verse:  
"says the Lord" —God's assurance  
"Be strong" (Do the work)

Verse 5

God will help them

Reference to God's spirit with Israel at Mount Sinai

Verse 6

"Once more":

(Hebrews 12: 26) --at Sinai God's "voice then shook the earth"

Verse 7 (end time prophecy)

“shake all nations” when Christ returns  
final shaking will result in Kingdom of God (Heb. 12: 27-28)

“Desire of all nations”—Jesus Christ (savior, deliverer)

“I will fill this temple with glory”

Millennial temple to be built at Christ’s return

Spiritual temple (Church) filled with glory at Christ’s return

Five things were lacking in Zerubbabel’s temple that were present in Solomon’s temple:

1. The ark of the covenant (containing the 10 commandments)
2. The Holy fire (for sacrifices)
3. The Shekinah glory (divine presence of God)
4. The spirit of prophecy (the Holy Spirit)
5. Urim and Thummim

Spiritual temple will have:

1. Law written on the hearts
2. Living sacrifices
3. Indwelling glory of God abides in the members
4. Prophetic word in the Church
5. God written word consulted

### Verse 8

God has unlimited resources  
Does not need gold and silver for construction of temple

### Verse 9

God's promise: "I will give you peace"

Lies yet into the future (not a description of Jerusalem and temple mount)

### Verse 10 (Third message: Cause and effect)

- Verses 10-14 reviews the problem with the people
- Date given here corresponds to Dec. 18, 520 BC

### Verse 11 (opens a discussion of holiness and defilement)

**The people** are told to ask questions of the priests

- Priests: interpret and teach the law
- Prophet : applies the law

### Verse 12

"holy meat"=an offering

If a man were carrying a dedicated meat offering and touched another object...would that object become holy?

Priests answered: NO it would not be holy

Holiness is not catching

Shows: it is easier to fall into sin than it is to fall into righteousness

Verse 13 (next question)...is defilement infectious?

“If someone touches a dead person, and so becomes ceremonially impure, and then brushes against something, does it become contaminated?”

➤ Answer: Defilement is contagious (unclean)

Verse 14 (Haggai’s response)

Emphasis on: “so is this people”... “and so is this nation”

Bottom line: “every work of their hands”...“what they offer **is unclean**”

➤ Their attitudes were wrong

They stopped working on the temple...but were still bringing offerings

➤ An outward show but were not doing what God wanted

Verse 15

Told again “to carefully consider” their plight while stopping their work on the temple

Verse 16

When they expected a 20 bushel crop there was only 10

When they expected to draw 50 gallons of wine there was only 20

**They were not blessed for disobedience**

Verse 17

God sent further chastisement

But they still did not repent: “**you did not turn to me**”

Three times God said: “**Consider**” (v. 15, 18)

*i.e. examine yourselves*

Verse 18 (paraphrased):

“from this day forward start thinking about how things have been...”

Calling attention to the difference in the people’s attitude

Verse 19

Now with their change of heart to renew work on the temple...God is blessing them

“From **this day** I will bless you”

Verse 20 (last message)

Verse 21 (to Zerubbabel personally)

Message to the civil ruler merges with God’s judgment on the nations

Verse 22 (prophecy of future)

Overthrowing of the nations by Christ (Rev.11: 15)

Verse 23 (“in that day”)...addresses Zerubbabel  
“I have chosen you”—Messianic line through him

“signet”—a mark **of honor and authority**...it represented  
It was valued and was worn constantly  
It prefigures Christ

“I have chosen you”—Zerubbabel had led the nation in repenting and returning to the  
work of God

Christ will lead the world in repenting and turning to God in the kingdom

## Lessons from Haggai

Remember the house of God—your spiritual temple...to build it up

Examine yourself to see if you are zealous for God or the material things

Seek God first in your life