

PART 4 THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS

Before studying the Book of Haggai it is advisable first to read the Preface in Part 1, also the Introduction to the Minor Prophets which precedes the Study on Hosea and to read each book prior to studying it. The section on each prophet is a complete Bible Study. Only a brief summary of the words of *The Voice of the Lord* (*red italics*) can be conveyed.

HAGGAI

INTRODUCTION

The *Voice of the Lord* as spoken by Haggai was conveyed in four messages, delivered by the prophet to the people of Jerusalem in a period of just four months in 520 B.C.

The prophet was elderly, maybe in his 70's, when he gave these concise dated messages, so it is possible that he could have witnessed the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C. Haggai was a contemporary of the much younger prophet Zechariah.

In 538 B.C. Cyrus, the King of Persia having conquered Babylon, issued a decree that allowed the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. The Jews were spurred into action because there was no House of the Lord, only the Temple's ruined foundations.

Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, who was made governor of Judah, 50,000 Jews returned and started to build. Zerubbabel was a direct descendant of King David.

There was great rejoicing (and weeping) when the foundations were completed in 2 years.
(Ezra 3: 8 - 13)

Further building work was delayed by opposition from the Samaritans (the people who had been settled in the land) and surrounding enemy nations. The Governor of Trans-Euphrates and other officials made every effort to stop the Jews (name of inhabitants of Judea after the exile) rebuilding the Temple.

The people of Jerusalem, living in poverty after the exile, were dejected and together with the problem of enemy obstructions, they gave up building the Temple. They grew complacent and turned to building their own houses until Darius became the Persian king in 522 B.C. Darius was interested in the religions of his empire and so supported the Jews against their enemies and in their rebuilding of the Temple.
(Ezra 4: 1 - 6: 15)

Two years later Haggai began giving his messages to encourage the people to continue building the House of the Lord.



FIRST MESSAGE - 1 . 6 . 520 B.C.

Read Haggai Chapter 1



The first message from the Lord was addressed to Zerubbabel the Governor and to Joshua the High Priest in a call to rebuild the Temple.

Thus says the Lord of hosts:

These people say, the time is not yet come that the Lord's house should be rebuilt – (although Cyrus had ordered it 18 years before).

Haggai 1: 2

Through Haggai, the Lord rebuked the dispirited people for making excuses and for building their own houses whilst leaving the Lord's house in ruins.

They were to consider their ways – an important theme in the messages.

(verses 1:5, 7, 2: 15, 18)

You have sown much, but you have reaped little; you eat, but you do not have enough; you drink, but you do not have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages has earned them to put them in a bag with holes in it.

Haggai 1: 6

The people were reminded that in God's Law there were bountiful blessings for obedience but only miserable curses for disobedience.

Their harvests of grain, wine and oil, the staple produce of the land, were consequently poor because the Lord had called for drought.

The people having failed to finish building the Temple were thus commanded –

Go up to the hill country and bring lumber and rebuild My house, and I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified.

Haggai 1: 8

The people of Jerusalem, listened and obeyed the *Voice of the Lord* through Haggai for the Lord had sent him.

Now the remnant of the people turned to the Lord in worship and reverent awe.

Haggai's message continued with these words:

I am with you, says the Lord.

Haggai 1: 13b

Twenty-four days later building work on the Temple resumed.

God had aroused the spirit in Zerubbabel, Joshua and all the people; and being so encouraged they had the motivation and strength to rebuild. Until the Temple was finished, the animal sacrifices could not be offered and the people's sins forgiven according to the Sinai Covenant.

SECOND MESSAGE - 21. 7. 520 B.C.

Haggai 2: 1 - 9

Haggai's second message from the Lord was addressed to Zerubbabel, Joshua and the remnant of the people. The message began with the *Voice of the Lord* asking questions followed by a command of encouraging words and the promise of His presence.

The older inhabitants of Jerusalem could only think of Solomon's temple and its glory.

Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Is not this in your sight as nothing in comparison to that? Haggai 2: 3

Yet now be strong and courageous, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; be strong and courageous, O Joshua; and be strong and courageous all you people of the land and work! For I am with you, says the Lord of hosts. According to the promise that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit stands in the midst of you; fear not. Haggai 2: 4, 5

The *Voice of the Lord* continued –

I will shake all nations and the desire and the precious things of all nations shall come in and I will fill this house with splendour. Haggai 2: 7

This verse is understood by some to be Messianic for the future coming of the Desire of all Nations would bring an even greater glory to the second Temple.

The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine, says the Lord of hosts. Haggai 2: 8

The latter glory of this house (with its successor to which Jesus came) shall be greater than the former; and in this place will I give peace and prosperity, says the Lord of hosts.

Haggai 2: 9

This promise was indeed fulfilled with the coming of Christ; even though the present rebuilding to the older generation was nothing like the magnificence of Solomon's Temple.

THIRD MESSAGE - 24. 9. 520 B.C.

Haggai 2: 10 - 19

The prophet was to question the priests concerning God's Law and holiness. On receiving their answers, the *Voice of the Lord* declared that the nation's sacrificial offerings had been unclean because the people were unclean.

So is this people and so is this nation before Me, says the Lord; and so is every work of their hands, and what they offer there (on the altar) is unclean (because they who offer it are unclean). Haggai 2: 14

Haggai again reminded the people to consider their ways. The people had not returned to the Lord and the Temple was still unfinished. The harvests had therefore been reduced by blight, mildew and hail because of the people's disobedience. (Deuteronomy 28: 1 - 8, 15 - 24)

On the day of Haggai's third message, the *Voice of the Lord* promised blessing, for the people had now turned to the Lord and resumed building the Temple.

From this day on I will bless you. Haggai 2: 19b

FOURTH MESSAGE - 24. 9. 520 B.C.

Haggai 2: 20 - 23

This message was given on the same day and was a promise to Zerubbabel.

Again Haggai declared that in a time to come Almighty God would shake the heavens and the earth; and the kingdoms of the ungodly nations would be destroyed.

The Lord promised Zerubbabel (King David's successor) that he would be His signet ring as a sure sign that the Messiah would come. This was a reversal of God's word to Jehoiachin, king of Judah, who did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

(Jeremiah 22: 24)

Zerubbabel was declared to be the Lord's chosen servant.

In that day, I will take you, O Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and will make you (through the Messiah, your descendant) My signet ring; for I have chosen you (as the one with whom to renew My covenant to David's line).

Haggai 2: 23



The temple was finished and dedicated in 516 B.C.

(Ezra 6: 14 - 16)

The returned exiles were now able to celebrated the Feast of Passover. As the sacrificial offerings of the Passover lambs were given, the sins of the priests and people were forgiven.

(Ezra 6: 19 – 22)

As foretold through Haggai, God's covenant with David would be renewed when Messiah comes – the once for all perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins.

(Hebrews 9: 13, 14)

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