

**A PERSONAL
VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY**

HAGGAI

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Hag. 1:1 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,

Hag. 1:2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.

Haggai's ministry is to the people of Judah in Jerusalem who have returned from the Babylonian captivity. He begins his prophetic ministry two months before Zechariah begins his ministry.

Zechariah 1:1 "In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying...."

He directs this message to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest—the head governmental and religious leaders of the people. The message—Rebuild the temple. According to the book of Ezra, the message produced the intended result.

Ezra 5:1-2 "Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them."

Since Haggai gives specific dates for the messages he was to deliver, we know that they came over a three-month period of time.

Point is made that this message is from YHWH, the self-existent, eternal God of Israel.

Hag. 1:3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,
Hag. 1:4 *Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?*

The first thing God says to His people through His prophet is that they have their priorities all wrong. They were more concerned with getting their own homes (re)built and well furnished than in getting God's house rebuilt and furnished. The temple is significantly different from the churches of today since it was established as God's dwelling place on earth and signified Israel as God's chosen people of blessing. While they were in captivity in Babylon, Ezekiel had informed the people that God had removed His glory from the temple. Although Ezra indicates that they had rebuilt the altar and reinstated the daily sacrifices, a truly repentant people would have set a great priority on rebuilding God's house and beseeching Him to reestablish His presence among them. Finally, in the second year they started working on the foundation of the temple, but met great opposition from some of the people in the land. These people eventually succeeded in getting Artaxerxes to command that the building be stopped. Finally, through the encouragement of Haggai and Zechariah, the

Israelites continued the building process and were given official permission to continue by Darius when he was presented with all the facts. (This background is all found in the book of Ezra.)

Hag. 1:5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

As He often does, YHWH asks His people to stop and think about their actions. This goes hand-in-hand with the admonition He often gives them to remember Who He Is and the miraculous ways He has provided for them throughout their history. The prophet's message is helping them to see the true condition of their hearts. Moses delivered this message to the people many times in his writings.

Deuteronomy 4:39 "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else."

Deuteronomy 8:5 "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee."

Deuteronomy 32:7 "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."

Hag. 1:6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

Hag. 1:7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

The people had been back in the land long enough to experience harvest from planting, and the results of the harvest had been very poor. Although they had planted much seed, it had produced little. They didn't have enough to satisfy their appetite for food and drink. I think the fact that their clothing wasn't sufficient was directly related to the quality of their livestock for producing wool and their lack of money to buy goods from others. The money they were able to earn seemed to disappear; it is pictured as going into bags full of holes. Boy can I relate to that comparison!

As the Lord continues to detail their circumstances, He again has the prophet ask them to stop and think. Could they be at fault for their poor circumstances because of their lack of faith and dependence upon God? Could the fact that they were putting self on the throne of their lives rather than God be the cause? I think Jesus expressed the same intent in His message to His disciples as recorded in Luke. I wonder if He was thinking about these verses in Haggai.

Luke 12:33-34 "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Hag. 1:8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.

God now instructs the people what to do after they have taken time to consider His message and their ways. That time of consideration should have resulted in recognition of the importance of rebuilding the temple. God makes it clear that if they will start rebuilding His house, He will take pleasure in it and will be glorified. The Hebrew for “take pleasure” included some interesting choices, “satisfy a debt...approve...pardon...reconcile self.” I’m always amazed at how little God requires from us to provide for our forgiveness and reconciliation of relationship with Him. It would seem that God is saying that He is giving them a chance at a clean slate regarding the temple. Even though He knows that it won’t be as beautiful and magnificent as Solomon’s temple, He will be glorified nonetheless through their obedience and desire to please Him.

Hag. 1:9 Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

Hag. 1:10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

Hag. 1:11 And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

God continues to explain through the prophet that He is the reason their harvest has been poor and they haven’t been able to provide for their own comfort. He was not going to allow them to prosper in their homes while His house lay in ruins. As the Creator, He controls His creation; He can hold back the dew and the rain. He can cause drought and directly impact the growth of the produce of the land, the ability to make wine and oil, and, in turn, the health of men and animals. They can work as hard as they can, but it will produce little without God’s blessing. This should not be new information to the people. Their past is full of examples of God’s authority over His creation to their benefit--actions that should have inspired faith and obedience, but somehow became taken for granted and assumed as their privilege as God’s chosen people.

Hag. 1:12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.

As shown in Ezra 5:2 above, the leaders of Israel, Zerubbabel and Joshua, led the people in obedience to God’s message. The people finally began to recognize God’s authority and show Him the proper reverence and respect He deserved, but it took the example of their leaders.

Hag. 1:13 Then spake Haggai the LORD’S messenger in the LORD’S message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD.

As He always does, the Lord readily responded with a promise of blessing to the people. There is no greater blessing than to know that YHWH is with you. I couldn't help but think of the words of Paul.

Romans 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Hag. 1:14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,

Hag. 1:15 In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

This chapter closes with the passing of 23 days from the first verse until the last. I think the main difference in verses 12 and 14 is one of obedience in response to fear of God in verse 12 vs. obedience as a result of changed hearts in verse 14.

I did not recognize that truth at first. God is so amazing! If we but respond in obedience to His will, He always meets us with empowerment to go above and beyond. Verse 14 is clear that it is God working in the hearts of the people as they responded to Him in obedience. He so wants to bless us and empower us to glorify Him if we will but show a little submission. My eyes are filling with tears as I realize what a poor testimony I am to His power.