

# **SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD -- COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HAGGAI**

by Paul G. Apple, May 2007

## **FOUR MESSAGES CHALLENGING THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO WHOLEHEARTEDLY COMMIT THEMSELVES TO THE WORK OF GOD**

*“and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God”*

- Haggai 1:14

For each section in the Book of Haggai:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

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Paul Apple, 304 N. Beechwood Ave., Baltimore MD 21228.

[www.bibleoutlines.com](http://www.bibleoutlines.com)

[paulgapple@gmail.com](mailto:paulgapple@gmail.com)

## BACKGROUND OF BOOK OF HAGGAI

**Malick:** Exhortations to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the remnant of the people to rebuild the temple in light of the present suffering and future glory spur them to obedience so that the Lord of Hosts promises to bring about blessing, future glory when the nations are destroyed, and honor to Zerubbabel as a future leader

**Hanko:** We know nothing about Haggai himself, except that he prophesied in years after the return from Babylon, as a contemporary of the prophet Zechariah, when Zerubbabel was governor of Judah and Darius king of the Persians. He is not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture and neither his prophecy nor the book of Ezra give us any information about him. There is not even any clear evidence that his name has any significance. In fact, as far as we know, he delivered only four prophecies, each of which is marked in the book of Haggai by a date. Those four prophecies were given over a period of just under four months (15 weeks). Whether Haggai's career as a prophet lasted longer, and whether there were other prophecies besides these four we do not know. . .

The first prophecy is a call to be busy with the work of building the temple accompanied by a warning against further neglect of the work. In that warning God points out the sins of his people and shows them how he was punishing them for those sins. Though they did not recognize the fact, many of the troubles they were suffering in Judah were God's chastisement. Attached to that first prophecy is an historical notice of the people's obedience to God's Word through Haggai and a word of encouragement to them in their work of rebuilding the temple. Haggai does not tell that part of the story, but the Jews obtained a decree from the king allowing them to build and providing them with the necessities for building and for the worship of God in the temple, to the consternation of their enemies (Ezra 5:3-6:13).

The second prophecy, found in chapter 2:1-9, is the most important of them all. In it God addresses the discouragement of the people, who could see, now that the work was progressing, that the temple they were building was not much in comparison with Solomon's temple. God not only encourages them with the promise that he would live in the temple as in old times, but also points them forward to the coming of Christ, to the building of the true temple, and to its glory, which would be far greater than the glory of Solomon's temple. This second prophecy concerns the future history of the temple and carries us all the way to the end of the world, when all things would be shaken to pieces and destroyed and only the true temple remain.

The third prophecy is a reminder to the people, through an example taken from the law of Moses, that because the work was God's work, they must be holy and work with holy hands. That warning is reinforced in chapter 2:13-19, with a reminder of God's former judgments and a promise of future blessing.

The fourth of these prophecies speaks again of the coming of Christ as the one in whom all the promises of God concerning the temple would be fulfilled. Christ is spoken of in the figure of Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and under that figure God not only

promises his people complete deliverance from their enemies, but also speaks of His great and eternal love for them as the motive for all his dealings with them.

**Lindsey:** Because of God's word of encouragement in verse 13 and the mention of a different date in verse 15, some scholars regard this section (vv. 12-15) as a separate prophetic message, making five in all. However, the date in verse 15 relates to the actual resumption of construction which probably followed the word of encouragement, so the whole section best fits the structure of the book as the response motif within this first of four messages.

**Constable:** The Babylonians, led by King Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, including Solomon's temple, in 586 B.C. and took most of the Jews captive to Babylon. There the Israelites could not practice their formal worship (religious cult) as the Mosaic Law prescribed because they lacked an authorized altar and temple. They prayed toward Jerusalem privately (cf. Dan. 6:10) and probably publicly, and they established synagogues where they assembled to hear their Law read and to worship God informally. King Cyrus of Persia allowed the Jewish exiles to return to their land in 538 B.C. At least three waves of returnees took advantage of this opportunity. The first of these was the Zerubbabel who replaced him, in 537 B.C. (Ezra 1:2-4). Haggai and Zechariah appear to have been two of these returnees, as was Joshua the high priest, though Haggai's name does not appear in the lists of returnees in the opening chapters of Ezra. During the year that followed, these returnees rebuilt the brazen altar in Jerusalem, resumed offering sacrifices on it, celebrated the feast of Tabernacles, and laid the foundation for the reconstruction of the (second) temple. Opposition to the rebuilding of the temple resulted in the postponement of construction for 16 years. During this long period, apathy toward temple reconstruction set in among the residents of Judah and Jerusalem. Then in 520 B.C., as a result of changes in the Persian government and the preaching of Haggai, the people resumed rebuilding the temple. They finished the project about five years later in 515 B.C. (cf. Ezra 1—6). Haggai first sounded the call to resume construction, and Zechariah soon joined him. Zechariah's ministry lasted longer than Haggai's.

Haggai delivered four messages to the restoration community, and he dated all of them in the second year of King Darius I (Hystaspes) of Persia (i.e., 520 B.C.). His ministry, as this book records it, spanned less than four months, from the first day of the sixth month (1:1) to the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (2:20). In the modern calendar this would have been between August 29 and December 18, 520 B.C. This means that Haggai was the first prophet to address the returned Israelites. Zechariah began prophesying to the returnees in the eighth month of that same year (Zech. 1:1). Haggai was the most precise of the prophets in dating his messages. . .

Haggai's purpose was simple and clear. It was to motivate the Jews to build the temple. To do this he also fulfilled a secondary purpose: he confronted the people with their misplaced priorities. They were building their own houses but had neglected God's house. It was important to finish building the temple because only then could the people fully resume Levitical worship as the Lord had specified. They had gone into captivity for

covenant unfaithfulness. Thus they needed to return to full obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Furthermore, in the ancient Near East the glory of a nation's temple(s) reflected the glory of the people's god(s). So to finish the temple meant to glorify Yahweh. . .

One writer ( adapted from **Motyer**) saw a chiastic structure in the book.

**A** A pair of oracles delivered on the same day that stress the negative consequences of the unfinished temple followed by a double call to take the Lord's word to heart 1:1-11

**B** The promise of the Lord's presence that would energize the reconstruction of the temple 1:13-15a

**B'** The promise of the Lord's presence that would guarantee coming glory 1:15b—2:9

**A'** A pair of oracles delivered on the same day that stress the positive consequences of the finished temple including a double call to take the Lord's word to heart 2:10-23.

**Copeland:**

#### I. A WORD OF REPROOF

A. BUILDING THE TEMPLE IS LONG OVERDUE...

B. THE PEOPLE SHOULD CONSIDER THEIR WAYS...

C. THE TESTIMONY OF THE PROPHET IS HEDED...

#### II. A WORD OF SUPPORT

A. ARE THE PEOPLE DISCOURAGED?

B. THE LORD PROVIDES A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT...

#### III. A WORD OF EXPLANATION

A. THE PEOPLE ARE OFFERING A WORK THAT IS UNCLEAN...

B. ONCE AGAIN THE PEOPLE ARE ASKED TO CONSIDER...

#### IV. A WORD OF PROMISE

A. GOD WILL OVERTHROW THE KINGDOMS OF THE NATIONS...

B. GOD'S SPECIAL PROMISE TO ZERUBBABEL...

#### CONCLUSION

Haggai's message was primarily designed to encourage Zerubbabel and the faithful remnant of Israel who had returned from Babylonian captivity...

a. To finish rebuilding the temple

b. To do so in a manner that would honor and glorify God

c. To look to the future with hope and promise

**Merrill:** In a day of profound discouragement and misplaced priorities following the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile, the prophet Haggai sounded a clarion call of rebuke, exhortation, and encouragement to his contemporaries. They had begun to rebuild

their own homes and businesses and to establish their statehood as a Jewish community but had been derelict in tending to the construction of the temple and making the Lord the central focus of all their hopes and dreams. The message of Haggai, so effective in shaking the Jews of 520 B.C. from their lethargy, has an abiding relevance for all who fail to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. . .

The repopulation of the land, at least outside Jerusalem, gave rise to the rebuilding of houses and storage buildings and to the clearing and cultivation of the farmlands. In fact, it was the rapidity and conviction with which this was done that caused Haggai to lament that, by comparison, the house of the Lord was neglected. His burden then was that this inequity be redressed and that the people do all they could in spite of their still rather limited resources to erect a house of the Lord that could provide a suitable expression of His presence among them. Until this was done the restoration would remain incomplete and the gracious promises of the Lord unfulfilled. . .

### ***Literary Structure***

As noted above, the book of Haggai consists of four addresses (1:1-15; 2:1-9; 2:10-19; 2:20-23), the first of which is subdivided into two sections (1:1-11; 1:12-15), is introduced by a chronological datum except for 1:12-15 where the chronological note follows the pericope. The reason for this, as already proposed, was to avoid a break in what is essentially one message—Haggai’s exhortation to rebuild (vv. 2-11) and the people’s response (vv. 12-14).

In addition, there are the usual formulae of address and transition. Thus, 1:1b notes the reception of the word of Yahweh by Haggai the prophet, a word to be delivered to Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the priest. Verse 12 reports the reaction of the officials and people, v. 13 a introduces the second message, v. 13b is that message, and v. 14 is the response to the second message. Following the closing and opening statements about chronology (1:15; 2:1a), there is the formula of reception of revelation (2:1b-2). The third message (2:3-9) follows and then the next chronological note (v. 10a) and reception of revelation (v. 10b). Finally, in reverse order, the word about revelation (v. 20a) and the last statement of chronology (v. 20b) introduce the fifth oracle (2:21-23). The literary form of the prophetic messages is difficult to categorize. The standard patterns typical of pre-exilic prophets seem to have broken down,<sup>46</sup> resulting in a rather eclectic assemblage of clichés and characteristics. Baldwin,<sup>47</sup> however, observes an equal division between the “judgment speech” and the “announcement of salvation” and points out the repeated order of accusation (1:1-11; cf. 2:10-17), response (1:12-14; cf. 2:18, 19), and assurance of God’s triumph (2:1-9; cf. 2:20-23).

The following outline indicates the structure of Haggai to be followed in the commentary.

- I. Rebuilding the Temple (1:1-15)
  - A. Introduction and Setting (1:1)
  - B. The Exhortation to Rebuild (1:2-11)
    - 1. The Indifference of the People (1:2-6)
    - 2. The Instruction of the People (1:7-11)
  - C. The Response of God's People (1:12-15)
    - 1. Their Attitude (1:12)
    - 2. Their Confidence (1:13)
    - 3. Their Work (1:14-15)
  
- II. The Glory to Come (2:1-9)
  - A. A Reminder of the Past (2:1-3)
  - B. The Presence of the Lord (2:4-5)
  - C. Outlook for the Future (2:6-9)
  
- III. The Promised Blessing (2:10-19)
  - A. Present Ceremonial Defilement (2:10-14)
    - 1. Righteousness Is Not Contagious (2:10-12)
    - 2. Wickedness Is Contagious (2:13-14)
  - B. Present Judgment and Discipline (2:15-19)
    - 1. The Rebuke of the People (2:15-17)
    - 2. The Prospects of the People (2:18-19)
  
- IV. Zerubbabel the Chosen One (2:20-23)
  - A. Divine Destruction (2:20-22)
  - B. Divine Deliverance (2:23)

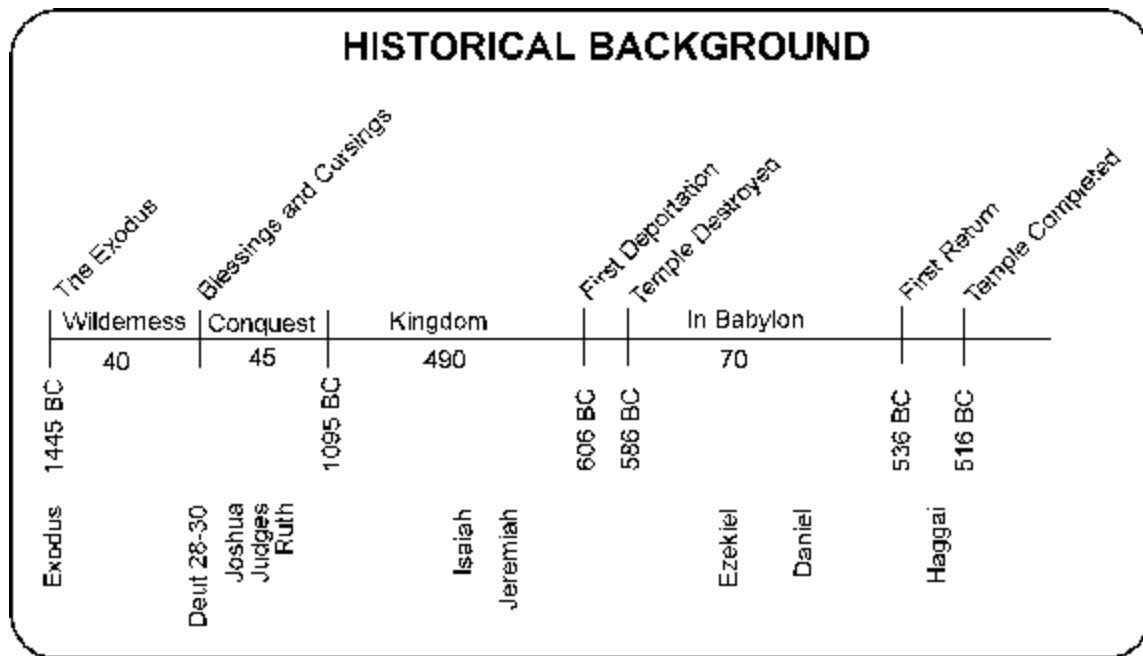
### ***Distinctive Teaching***

At the heart of the book of Haggai is the prophet's urgent insistence that the postexilic Jewish community get to the work of rebuilding the Temple. As Childs points out, the first (1:1-15) and third (2:10-19) oracles relate the present poverty of the people to the disregard of God's Temple whereas in the second (2:1-9) and fourth (2:20-23) the promise is reiterated that Israel's eschatological hope is still valid.<sup>48</sup> Though these two great themes may not be viewed in a cause-and-effect manner, Haggai nevertheless makes it clear that present rebuilding is prerequisite to future glory.

Haggai's distinctiveness lies in his single-mindedness. No other prophecy is so fixed on a specific objective, nor is it likely that any other was so successful in its accomplishment (1:12, 14; cf. Ezra 5:1-2). With his feet firmly planted in the world of the sixth century B.C., Haggai lifted up his eyes and those of his people to the eschaton as well—to the day when the Lord would fill His house with His glory and peace (2:7-9). Faithfulness in the comparatively little details of today will yield incalculable dividends in the tomorrows to come.

Keathley:

## ***Historical Background.***



Up to this point in our study of the minor prophets we've been talking about how the Israelites didn't obey the commands in Deuteronomy 28-30, so God was going to punish them. The prophets all came and warned of coming destruction of Israel by Assyria and Babylon. God would use Assyria to destroy the northern nation - Israel, and Babylon to destroy the southern nation - Judah. Those were all pre-exilic prophets telling of the coming exile. Now we are jumping over exile (when Daniel, Jeremiah and Ezekiel wrote) to the post-exilic prophets. They wrote after the exile.

The Jews had been in captivity in Babylon for 70 years (Jer. 25: 11f.) They were first deported in 606 BC. and the final destruction of the temple was in 586. When the Persians defeated the Babylonians in 539, Darius took over and changed the foreign policy concerning captive peoples. In 538 he decreed that the Jews could return to their homeland and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1-3).

After an initial stage of construction on the foundation (Ezra 3:8-13), opposition from without and within stopped the work for a period of 14 years. With the work on the temple halted, the people began to pursue their own selfish interests and once again began to experience the discipline of God upon their lives (Hag. 1: 7-11).

God used Haggai and Zechariah to get the leaders and the people to once again focus on the work of God. Through the leading of God, the ministry of the prophets, the decree and the funding of Darius I, and the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, the rebuilding of the temple was resumed and completed in 516 BC., exactly 70 years after its destruction.<sup>2</sup>

Does anyone know the significance of being in captivity for 70 years?

If you will remember, as part of the law, God told the people to let the land rest every seventh year. Did they do it? No. They were in the land 490 years and never observed the Sabbath

year for the land. How many Sabbath years did they miss? Seventy. So God made up for it by taking all the Sabbath years at one time.

606 first invasion / 586 final invasion and destruction of the temple

536 first return / 516 temple finished

Either way you figure it (from the people or the temple) you have 70 years of captivity. You would almost think God was in control. The point is this: We can do it the easy way or the hard way, but either way, God will get His way. That's why it is important for me to have my priorities right and put obedience to God first.

How do you know if you have your priorities straight? And if you don't, What do you do about it? I think Haggai can give us some help in determining the answers to these questions.

**Message Statement:** Misplaced priorities in our lives can be diagnosed and treated.

**Transition:** So now that we understand how Haggai fits into the history of Israel, what is the Purpose of Haggai? It was to get the people to rebuild the temple - to get the people to resume construction on the temple. How does he do that? He preaches four sermons to the people which we could outline as follows:

## HAGGAI

First Sermon	Second Sermon	Third Sermon	Fourth Sermon
1:1-15	2:1-9	2:10-19	2:20-23
Conviction	Courage	Cleanliness	Consumation
Rebuke Reminder Response	God's Presence God's Peace	Defilement Dependency	Sovereign King Signet king

### Outline:

- I. The First Message: A Call to Rebuild the Temple (1:1-15)
  - A. The Introduction (1:1)
  - B. The First Rebuke (1:2-6)
  - C. The Remedy (1:7-8)
  - D. The Second Rebuke (1:9-11)
  - E. The Response to the Prophet's Message (1:12-15)
  
- II. The Second Message: A Call to Find Courage in God's Promises (2:1-9)
  - A. The Introduction (2:1-2)
  - B. The Promises of Enablement and Future Glory (2:3-9)



III. The Third Message: A Call to Cleanness of Life (2:10-19)

- A. The Introduction (2:10)
- B. The Problem: The Disobedience of the Remnant (2:11-14)
- C. The Solution: The Obedience of the Remnant (2:15-19)

IV. The Fourth Message: A Call to Confidence in the Future (2:20-23)

- A. The Introduction (2:20-21a)
- B. A Promise of the Future Defeat of the Gentile Kingdoms (2:21b-22)
- C. A Promise of the Restoration of the Davidic Kingdom (2:23)

**Baxter:** *"From this day I will bless you"*

First Message – To Arouse (1:1-15)

Date: Sixth month, first day.

Crux: *"Build the House"* (1:8)

Second Message – To Support (2:1-9)

Date: Seventh month, 21<sup>st</sup> day.

Crux: *"I am with you"* (2:4)

Third Message – To Confirm (2:10-19)

Date: Ninth month, twenty-fourth day.

Crux: *"From this day will I bless you."*

Fourth Message – To Assure (2:20 – 3)

Date: Ninth month, twenty-fourth day.

Crux: *"In that day I will make thee . . ."*

# OUTLINE OF HAGGAI

## SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

### FOUR MESSAGES CHALLENGING THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO WHOLEHEARTEDLY COMMIT THEMSELVES TO THE WORK OF GOD

*“and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God”*  
- Haggai 1:14

#### **(1:1-11) MESSAGE 1 – CHECK OUT YOUR PRIORITIES**

##### **BIG IDEA:**

##### **THE WORK OF THE LORD AND HIS GLORY MUST BE OUR #1 PRIORITY**

##### **I. (:1-2) SETTING: COMPLACENCY AND EXCUSES REGARDING THE WORK OF THE LORD**

- A. (:1A) Date Stamp for Message 1
- B. (:1B) Delivery of the Message
  - 1. The Lord’s Message -- Powerful
  - 2. The Lord’s Messenger -- Faithful
  - 3. The Lord’s Target Audience = the Main National Leaders of Judah – Responsible for motivating the people to obey the Lord
- C. (:2) Denunciation of Complacency and Excuses Regarding the Work of the Lord

##### **II. (:3-6) CONSIDER YOUR WAYS = NOTHING TO SHOW FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK – WHY??**

- A. (:3) Prophetic Message Introduced
- B. (:4) Problem Exposed: No Priority Given to the Work of the Lord
- C. (:5) Probing Encouraged: Call to Check Out Your Priorities
- D. (:6) Proof Detailed: Life of Futility
  - 1. Reversal of the Harvest Principle – Frustration of Expectations
  - 2. Frustration at the Very Base Level of Existence – the very 3 things needed for contentment – the very things God has promised to provide so that we need not be anxious like the Gentiles
  - 3. Futility of All Work – no way to recover – no hope

##### **III. (:7-11) CONSIDER YOUR WAYS = THE PROVIDENTIAL HAND OF THE LORD IS AGAINST YOU -- EXPLANATION**

- A. (:7) Probing Encouraged Again

- B. (:8) Pleasing God Must Be #1 = Go and Rebuild the Temple
- C. (:9) Problem Reiterated: No Priority Given to the Work of the Lord
- D. (:10-11) Providence Denied

## **(1:12-15) RESPONSE TO MESSAGE 1 – COMMIT TO THE WORK OF THE LORD**

### **BIG IDEA:**

**THE LORD IS WITH THOSE WHO OBEDIENTLY COMMIT TO PERFORM HIS WORK FOR HIS GLORY**

### **I. (:12) THE PROPER RESPONSE TO THE AUTHORITATIVE, COMMANDING WORD OF GOD**

- A. Unified Response – on the part of all the key leaders and all the people
  - 1. On the Part of the Key Leaders
  - 2. On the Part of All the People
- B. Obedient Response – Revelation Demands a Response of Obedience
  - 1. Revelation Demands a Response of Obedience Because of Its Divine Source
  - 2. Revelation Demands a Response of Obedience as it is Faithfully Communicated by God's Appointed Messenger
- C.. Reverent Response

### **II. (:13) THE PERSONAL REASSURANCE OF THE LORD'S PRESENCE = HIS PROTECTION, AND PROVIDENTIAL PROVISION**

- A. The Messenger of the Word of Reassurance
- B. The Authority of the Word of Reassurance
- C. The Significance of the Word of Reassurance

### **III. (:14-15) THE PEOPLE'S RESOLVE TO PERFORM THE LOFTY WORK OF THE LORD**

- A. Energized by the Spirit of God
  - 1. The Lord Stirred Up the Key Leaders
  - 2. The Lord Stirred Up the People
- B. Committed to Engage the Lofty Task and Work Hard for God's Glory
  - 1. Overcoming the Inertia to Get Started
  - 2. Working Hard for God's Glory
- C. Date Stamp

## **(2:1-9) MESSAGE 2 – COUNT ON GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS PROMISES AS YOU BOLDLY LABOR FOR HIM – DON'T GET DISCOURAGED**

**BIG IDEA:**

**EVALUATE PRESENT REALITIES NOT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PAST PERFORMANCE BUT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FUTURE PROMISES OF MILLENNIAL GLORY AND BLESSING**

**(:1-2) CONTEXT: MESSAGE #2 FROM GOD TO HIS LOYAL WORKERS**

- A. Date Stamp
- B. Prophetic Message #2
- C. Same Audience

**I. (:3-5) PAST FAILURES MUST NOT DISTRACT US FROM BOLDLY FULFILLING OUR PRESENT MINISTRY IN RELIANCE UPON THE ALL-SUFFICIENT RESOURCE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD**

- A. (:3) The Reminders of Blown Opportunities in the Past Can Discourage Us  
3 Rhetorical Questions Exposing Potential for Discouragement
  - 1. Longing for the Good Old Days
  - 2. Looking at Every Flaw
  - 3. Letting Discouragement Overwhelm You
- B. (:4-5) The Reassurance of the Presence of God Motivates Bold Ministry  
2 Simple Responsibilities Coupled with 1 All Sufficient Divine Provision

**II. (:6-9) FUTURE PROMISES OF MILLENNIAL BLESSING AND GLORY GIVE HOPE TO THE LORD'S LABORERS --  
3 ASPECTS OF ESTABLISHING THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF THE MESSIAH**

- A. (:6-7a) Judgmental Preparation = **Shaking the Universe** with Cataclysmic Phenomena
- B. (:7b-8) Sovereign Glorification – **Filling the Temple** with Glory and Prosperity
- C. (:9) Supreme Dominion – **Reigning in Glory** and Administering Peace
  - 1. Proper Perspective of Comparison = Supreme Glory
  - 2. Peaceful Administration

**(2:10-19) MESSAGE 3 – CONSECRATE YOURSELF AND GOD WILL BLESS YOUR SERVICE**

**BIG IDEA:**

**HOLINESS IS A PREREQUISITE TO ACCEPTABLE SERVICE AND THE BLESSING OF GOD**

**(:10) SETTING**

- A. Date Stamp
- B. Prophetic Message #3

**I. (:11-14) THE OBJECT LESSON POINTS TO THE PREREQUISITE OF HOLINESS BEFORE ANY SERVICE CAN BE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD**

- A. (:11) Object Lesson Introduced
- B. (:12-13) Object Lesson Illustrated Via 2 Contrasting Questions
  - 1. (:12) Question #1 -- Is Holiness Contagious? NO
  - 2. (:13) Question #2 – Is Uncleanness Contagious? YES
- C. (:14) Object Lesson Applied – Unholy Sacrifices Are Worthless to God--  
God's People Must Put a Priority on Consecration

**II. (:15-19) THE HISTORICAL EXAMPLE REINFORCES THE OBJECT LESSON – HOLINESS IS A PREREQUISITE TO ACCEPTABLE SERVICE AND THE BLESSING OF GOD**

- A. (:15-17) Sin Brings Discipline to Motivate Repentance
  - 1. (:15) Reflect
  - 2. (:16) Recount the Frustration of Past Discipline
  - 3. (:17) Respond in Repentance to the Discipline of the Lord
- B. (:18-19) Obedience Brings Blessing to Motivate Abundant Service
  - 1. (:18) Reflect
  - 2. (:19a) Recount the Harvest Law
  - 3. (:19b) Respond in Obedience to Benefit from God's Promised Blessing

**(2:20-23) MESSAGE #4 – CROWN THE SERVANT OF THE LORD  
THE VICTORIOUS MESSIAH**

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE SOVEREIGN GOD WILL EXALT HIS CHOSEN KING TO RULE OVER ALL NATIONS AND KINGDOMS**

**(:20-21a) SETTING FOR MESSAGE #4**

- A. Prophetic Message #4
- B. Date Stamp
- C. Target Audience

**I. (:21b-22) THE DEFEAT OF ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE NATIONS –  
FOUR PROMISES OF DESTRUCTION ACCOMPLISHED BY GOD HIMSELF**

- A. (:21b) Rocking the Entire World
- B. (:22a) Overthrowing All Thrones
- C. (:22b) Destroying All Power
- D. (:22c) Defeating All Opposition

**II. (:23) THE ENTHRONEMENT OF THE MESSIAH TO RULE OVER THE  
KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH**

- A. Timing of the Messiah's Enthronement
- B. Targeting of the Messiah's Prefigurement
- C. Trumpeting of the Messiah's Majesty
- D. Testifying to the Messiah's Election

TEXT: Haggai 1:1-11

TITLE: MESSAGE 1 – CHECK OUT YOUR PRIORITIES

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE WORK OF THE LORD AND HIS GLORY MUST BE OUR #1 PRIORITY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

*“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.”* God’s people come up with many excuses to justify their pursuing a life of personal comfort and pleasure. But there is no ultimate satisfaction apart from a life that is whole-heartedly committed to the work of the Lord and His glory.

**I. (:1-2) SETTING: COMPLACENCY AND EXCUSES REGARDING THE WORK OF THE LORD**

A. (:1A) Date Stamp for Message 1

*“In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month”*

**Hanko:** This first mention of Darius is a reminder that the Jews, at the time of Haggai’s prophecy, were no longer an independent nation, but under the dominion of foreign and heathen kings. They even dated events now by the reigns of these strange kings who ruled from far-off Persia. The fact that this king is not the same king who sent them back to Judah is a reminder that many years had passed and the work of the temple was not yet finished. It was Cyrus who had sent them back, and now another king named Darius was on the throne of Persia. It was also a reminder that circumstances had changed once again and that they could no longer use the hostility of former kings as an excuse for their neglect of God’s house, for neglect it was, as Haggai points out in verse two.

B. (:1B) Delivery of the Message

1. The Lord’s Message -- Powerful

*“the word of the Lord”*

2. The Lord’s Messenger -- Faithful

*“came by the prophet Haggai”*

Name means *“festal one”*

3. The Lord’s Target Audience = the Main National Leaders of Judah – Responsible for motivating the people to obey the Lord

a. Political Leader

*“to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah,”*

b. Religious Leader

*“and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest”*

**Hanko:** The mention of these two men is evidence of God's faithfulness to Judah, a faithfulness that makes their unfaithfulness all the more inexcusable. God had preserved both the line of David and of Aaron through the awful years that led to and followed the Babylonian captivity. He had preserved those lines not because there was any merit in the house of David or of Aaron, but that his promises, especially the promise to live with his people and be their God, might not fail.

More importantly, however, these men in their offices of priest and governor represent Christ himself. It is really through him and from him that this word of God concerning the temple comes, and it is by his grace that the word of God through Haggai bears the good fruit of obedience in the hearts and lives of God's people. Even in the Old Testament he was the great temple builder and nothing could or would be done without him

C. (:2) Denunciation of Complacency and Excuses Regarding the Work of the Lord  
*"saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, This people says, The time has not come, even the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.'"*

Preposterous even on the surface; just by expressing the hesitancy of the people their selfish priorities are exposed.

What types of **excuses** do we see people hiding behind?

- **Mat. 8:21** *"permit me first to go and bury my father"* – putting family ahead of the Lord; waiting around to collect the security of one's inheritance

- **Luke 9:61** *"but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home"* – No place for emotional distractions or double-minded types of commitment

- **Luke 14:18-20**

The issue is one of priorities and whole-hearted commitment

## **II. (:3-6) CONSIDER YOUR WAYS = NOTHING TO SHOW FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK – WHY??**

A. (:3) Prophetic Message Introduced

*"Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying"*

B. (:4) Problem Exposed: No Priority Given to the Work of the Lord

*"Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?"*

C. (:5) Probing Encouraged: Call to Check Out Your Priorities

*"Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Consider your ways!'"*

D. (:6) Proof Detailed: Life of Futility

1. Reversal of the Harvest Principle – Frustration of Expectations

*"You have sown much, but harvest little"*

2. Frustration at the Very Base Level of Existence – the very 3 things needed for contentment – the very things God has promised to provide so that we need not be anxious like the Gentiles

a. Food

*“You eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied;”*

b. Drink

*“You drink, but there is not enough to become drunk;”*

c. Clothing

*“You put on clothing, but no one is warm enough;”*

3. Futility of All Work – no way to recover – no hope

*“And he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes.”*

### **III. (:7-11) CONSIDER YOUR WAYS = THE PROVIDENTIAL HAND OF THE LORD IS AGAINST YOU -- EXPLANATION**

A. (:7) Probing Encouraged Again

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Consider your ways!’”*

B. (:8) Pleasing God Must Be #1 = Go and Rebuild the Temple

*“Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,” says the Lord.”*

Opposite of selfishness and pleasing self

Requires initiative and hard work; must set aside other distractions; must be willing to suffer hardship

Glory of God at stake

C. (:9) Problem Reiterated: No Priority Given to the Work of the Lord

*“You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why? Declares the Lord of hosts, Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house.”*

D. (:10-11) Providence Denied

*“Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew and the earth has withheld its produce. I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands.”*

\*\*\*\*\*

### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) Why does Haggai take such care to specifically date stamp each of his prophetic messages?



2) Where have we become complacent or allowed our priorities to reflect those of the world rather than those of the people of God?

3) How has God used frustration in our lives to draw us back to dependence and commitment to Himself?

4) Are we always correct to make a connection today between loyalty to God and physical prosperity? What is different in today's dispensation?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Holwick:** "WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES?" Haggai 1:5-10

#### I. Background of prophet Haggai.

##### A. Precise dating of his prophecies.

- 1) 29 Aug to 18 Dec, 520 BC.
- 2) Short ministry with a single focus: God's work.

##### B. Jews were chastened by Exile in Babylon.

- 1) Religion cleaned up.
  - a) Haggai doesn't condemn idols or false religion.
- 2) Morality cleaned up.
  - a) No gross sins condemned by Haggai.

##### C. But Jews were also worn out.

- 1) Most had become complacent in Babylon.
  - a) Out of 24 orders of priests, only 4 sent members back to Jerusalem. (Ezra 2:36-39)
- 2) Those in Jerusalem were tired of opposition.
  - a) Ezra's command to build Temple had stagnated for 18 years.
- 3) "The time is not right!" 1:4
  - a) It never is for God's work, from our perspective.
  - b) It always is, from God's perspective.

#### II. Prophet Haggai preached about spiritual priorities.

##### A. What hinders God's work?

- 1) Disobedience gets most blame.
- 2) Wrong priorities is really main problem.
  - a) Giving God second place more devastating than 100 sins.

##### B. Haggai challenges them to consider reason for difficulties. 1:5-6

- 1) Tough times for us may not be coincidences.

### III. God's commands for priorities.

#### A. Put God's work first. "Build the house." 1:8

- 1) Neglect of the Temple.
  - a) Half-hearted attempt to rebuild.
    - 1> Initial decree of Cyrus to rebuild. Ezra 6:3b-5
    - 2> Altar built, and sacrifices. Ezra 3:2
    - 3> Foundations laid. Ezra 5:16
  - A> 18 years of laxness follow.
  - b) Their own homes got more attention. 1:4
    - 1> Not a matter of poor resources, but priorities.
    - 2> They were apathetic and self-centered.
    - 3> Reason economy was a shambles.
- 2) How much time do we devote to God?
  - a) Time is like money - it shows where our heart is.

#### B. Believe that God's work is greater.

- 1) Don't judge by appearances.
  - a) Jews responded to Haggai with an initial burst of energy.
    - 1> After one month, discouragement set in.
    - 2> New Temple didn't measure up. Hag 2:3
    - A> Old priests wept aloud. Ezra 3:12
    - B> "Don't despise day of small things" Zech 4:10
  - b) Don't judge God's work in human terms.
    - 1> Cults are low on consistency, high on appearance.
    - 2> History of our own church.
    - 3> Believe that God's work is greater than it looks.
    - A> Jesus taught in this temple 500 years later. 2:9

#### C. Don't expect easy, immediate results.

- 1) After 3 months of rebuilding, why no blessing?
- 2) Yet blessings will follow obedience. 2:10-19
  - a) Not crass commercialism.
  - b) God is looking for loyalty.

#### D. Remember, the most important thing is to belong to God. 2:4-5

- 1) We have his covenant. (New life through Jesus)
- 2) We have his Spirit.
- 3) We must hear his command - be strong and work! 2:5

**Piper:** The first message in chapter 1 reveals to the governor and priest and people that the reason they are all frustrated is that they have tried to make their own lives comfortable while neglecting the temple of God. . . So they lived in perpetual frustration and discontentment. Nothing satisfied. We can't pass over this lesson easily. It's for us, too. If you devote yourself to sowing and eating and drinking and clothing yourselves and earning wages but neglect your ministry in the body of Christ (the temple of God, 1 Cor. 3:16,17), you will live in constant frustration. If you spend your

time and energy seeking comfort and security from the world and do not spend yourself for the glory of God every pleasure will leave its sour aftertaste of depression and guilt and frustration. . .

Both then and now the real problem is not the neglect of a building but indifference to the glory of God. The temple of the Old Testament existed for the glory of God. And the Church today exists for the glory of God (Eph. 1:6,12,14). Indifference to the growth and spiritual prosperity of the Church and its mission is always a sign of failure to love the glory of God. And the sour fruit of this failure is a life of chronic frustration. He who seeks to save his life will lose it to continual frustrations; but he who loses his life for the glory of God and the good of His cause will find life, deep and fulfilling.

**MacArthur:** Haggai begins his message by quoting a popular expression of the people, saying it was not time to build the temple. Though propelled by the hostile opposition of their neighbors (Ezr 4:1 – 5:24) and the lack of economic prosperity (cf. vv. 9-11), the roots of their reluctance lay ultimately in their selfish indifference to the Lord. God's displeasure is noted in His reference to them as "*This people*" and not "My people." They wanted their wealth for themselves, not a temple. . .

Three imperatives (vs. 8) give the remedy for their trouble. The long captivity of 70 years had let the forests grow so there was ample wood. They were to use it to rebuild the house of the Lord, and therein He would be glorified. By putting God first, He would then be honored in their worship and they would be blessed in the secondary matters of life. Compare this pitiful project (Ezr 3:12; Hag 2:3) to the opulence of Solomon's first temple (cf. 1Ch 28, 29; 2Ch 2-6).

**Mackay:** Restoring the Temple would show that the people recognized their strength and well-being derived from the Lord's presence with them. Such an attitude of dependence and expression of covenant fealty would render what they did acceptable to God.

**Dave Rembert:**

1. Their root problem was procrastination. They went from discouragement that resulted from opposition to procrastination.
2. They had become complacent in their service and relationship with God.
3. They became self-centered focused more on their own homes rather than on the house of God.
4. They grew cold towards the things of God and as a result lacked sensitivity to the leading and will of God.

**Steven J. Cole:** Putting First Things First

**1. We all are prone to put our prosperity above God's house.**

- A. Those who put their prosperity above God's house are often committed believers.

- B. Those who put their prosperity above God's house have "reasons" (excuses) for their lifestyles.
- C. Those who put their prosperity above God's house are blind to God's chastening hand.
- D. Those who put their prosperity above God's house never get what they're after.

**2. We must deliberately and continually put God's house above our prosperity.**

- A. To put God's house above material prosperity requires deliberate and continual effort.
- B. To put God's house above material prosperity requires constant self-evaluation in the fear of God.

*(1) How are you spending your time?* These people had plenty of time for themselves, but they didn't have time for God. Rearrange your schedule!

*(2) How are you spending your money, which is really God's money?* These folks claimed that they had to get their own houses built first, and then they could build God's house. That was backwards. God says that we are to give Him the first fruits, off the top. We are to give Him the best. We are managers of all that He has given us, to invest it profitably for His kingdom.

*(3) What are your goals?* What is it that you're aiming at in life? If you live to an old age, what do you want to look back on as far as accomplishments?

*(4) What do you think about the most?* What secretly occupies your thought life? Do you dream of getting rich, of achieving fame, of some hobby or leisure pursuit, or do you think about the Lord and how He wants you to spend your life?

*(5) Who are your heroes or models?* Whom do you most admire? Whom would you like to be like? Why?

*(6) Who are your friends?* Whom do you like to spend time with? Why do you like to be with them?

*(7) How do you spend your leisure time?* When you have time off, how do you spend it? Do you watch TV? Do you live for sports? Do you hang out with friends? How does your leisure time reflect and affect your devotion to Jesus Christ?

**David Legge:** Build God's House

***Haggai 1:1-15***

1. The Rebuke For Procrastination (verses 2-4)
2. The Reaping Of Poverty (verses 5-6)
3. The Reason For Poverty (verses 9-11)
4. The Remedy For Poverty (verses 5,7,8)
5. The Renewal Of Purpose (verses 12-15)

TEXT: Haggai 1:12-15

TITLE: RESPONSE TO MESSAGE 1 – COMMIT TO THE WORK OF THE LORD

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE LORD IS WITH THOSE WHO OBEDIENTLY COMMIT TO PERFORM HIS WORK FOR HIS GLORY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The Lord works in our hearts through His revelation to stir up our hearts to carry out His work. His revelation demands a response of obedience. His leaders should set the example and galvanize corporate support for working together to promote the glory of God. The reassurance of the presence of God with His obedient people provides the confidence and security to carry out the task – no matter how difficult and no matter the obstacles.

**I. (:12) THE PROPER RESPONSE TO THE AUTHORITATIVE, COMMANDING WORD OF GOD**

A. Unified Response – on the part of all the key leaders and all the people

1. On the Part of the Key Leaders

a. Zerubbabel – Political Leader

*“Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel”*

b. Joshua – Religious Leader

*“and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest”*

2. On the Part of All the People

*“with all the remnant of the people”*

**Hanko:** The people are referred to now as the remnant, not as “this people.” In that way God shows that he still cared for them as he had when he brought them back from Babylon. For us, however, that name “remnant” not only reminds us of their small numbers - less than 50,000 had returned from Babylon - but to show us that the church is always but a remnant among men, and that her size and insignificance, does not in any way excuse her from her calling to be built up a spiritual temple and a dwelling place of God. It reminds us, too, that the word of encouragement which God sends through Haggai was necessary because of their small numbers and other discouragements.

B. Obedient Response – Revelation Demands a Response of Obedience

1. Revelation Demands a Response of Obedience Because of Its Divine Source

*“obeyed the voice of the Lord their God”*

God’s Word is

- Authoritative – Not human, but Divine in its Origin

- Commanding – Calls for submissive action
- Clear – Perspicuity of Scriptures

2. Revelation Demands a Response of Obedience as it is Faithfully Communicated by God’s Appointed Messenger

*“and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him”*

How do we respond to God’s appointed messengers?

How do we distinguish between those genuine prophets whom God has sent vs those self-appointed false prophets who run on their own?

C.. Reverent Response

*“And the people showed reverence for the Lord.”*

How did they show reverence? How do we show reverence?

**Mackay:** *“Fear”* is often used to refer to that attitude of reverence and awe that should characterize us before God. . . . But the expression here is not the usual one, but rather *“feared before the Lord”* which indicates consternation and fright. It is used to express the people’s fear of the fire of God at Sinai (Deut. 5:5) and later of their fear of the king of Babylon (Jer. 42:11; see also Ex. 9:30; 1 Kgs. 3:28). On this occasion it might have arisen from their consciences being smitten by awareness of their former lapses. They had not carried out all the plans they had made. They had failed to do what God required. The solemn reality came home to them of how dreadful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31). How different this was from the way their forefathers had resented and spurned the messages brought by the former prophets.

**II. (:13) THE PERSONAL REASSURANCE OF THE LORD’S PRESENCE = HIS PROTECTION, AND PROVIDENTIAL PROVISION**

A. The Messenger of the Word of Reassurance

*“Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord,”*

B. The Authority of the Word of Reassurance

*“spoke by the commission of the Lord to the people”*

Not giving false hope or false promises of peace and provision

C. The Significance of the Word of Reassurance

*“saying, ‘I am with you,’ declares the Lord.”*

- Divine Protection

- Providential Provision

**Mackay:** Reminders of God's presence with his people are often accompanied by a "Fear not" (2 Chr. 20:17; Isa. 41:10; Acts 18:9-10). The reality of God's reconciled and restored presence was signified by the Tabernacle and Temple.

**Hanko:** The words that Haggai brought are the heart of every word of encouragement God gives us. He does not tell us what is ahead, he never tries to reassure us by minimizing future difficulties or by promising that there would be none. All he ever really says is this, "I am with you." We must remember that in all our work and not judge the value and profit by visible results, by the lack of difficulties, or by our own perceptions of the work.

### **III. (:14-15) THE PEOPLE'S RESOLVE TO PERFORM THE LOFTY WORK OF THE LORD**

*"consider our high calling"* – not some mundane, insignificant work we are called to perform; this work concerns the very glory of God

**Mackay:** *"Stir up"* is literally "wake up" (it is the word used in Zech. 4:1). The people had become lethargic – with respect to divine things, at any rate. God makes them willing and glad to carry out what is required (Ps. 110:3; 2 Cor. 9:16).

#### A. Energized by the Spirit of God

##### 1. The Lord Stirred Up the Key Leaders

###### a. Zerubbabel – Political Leader

*"So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah"*

###### b. Joshua – Religious Leader

*"and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest"*

##### 2. The Lord Stirred Up the People

*"and the spirit of all the remnant of the people"*

#### B. Committed to Engage the Lofty Task and Work Hard for God's Glory

##### 1. Overcoming the Inertia to Get Started

*"and they came"*

##### 2. Working Hard for God's Glory

*"and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God"*

Obedience is not just a determination to do the right thing; it involves carrying out the action itself – good intentions are not enough

#### Cf. lessons from Book of Nehemiah

We know from chapter 2 that the people needed repeated encouragement to continue to take up the work and persevere and see it through to conclusion.

### C. Date Stamp

*“on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the king.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What were some of the obstacles the people might have faced that would have discouraged them from completing the task at hand? What obstacles do we face?
- 2) How is unity achieved in people working together with the same vision to accomplish great things for God?
- 3) Trace the other instances in Scripture of God promising His presence with His people (*“I am with you”*). What lessons do you learn?
- 4) What was so significant about building the house of the Lord? Why was this task so high on God’s priority list?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Piper:** But the promise is not only that he will be at your side; he will also be in your heart encouraging you. Look back at the end of 1:13. "I am with you, says the Lord. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord." If we will ask him and trust him God not only works with us but he moves in to stir up our spirit and give us a heart for the work. He doesn't want crusty diehards in his work, he wants free and joyful laborers. And so he promises to be with them and stir them up to love the work. . .

The point is this: God had a purpose for a Temple. The Jews of Haggai's day could not see it all and what they could see seemed so paltry. So God came to them with a word of promise: Take courage. You build more than you see. The heavens and the earth and sea and land and all treasures are mine. I will take the fruit of your little labor and make it glorious beyond measure, no matter how trivial and paltry it may seem to you now.

**Stedman:** How long did the work last? Three weeks. And then it ground to a halt again. Notice the calendar (chapter 2, verses 1-3): . . .

Now God was repeating what the people were saying. They had gotten started and the temple had begun to go up. There was a bustle of excitement until an old man came



down to watch the work. He had been a child when they were carried captive into Babylon and had seen the temple of Solomon in all its great glory, and as old men sometimes do, he was living in the past. And he said, "Do you call this a temple? This heap of ruins here? I saw Solomon's temple, and what you are building here is nothing compared to that. All the gold and silver that was in that temple -- it was amazing! And you don't even have any gold or silver. How are you going to decorate this temple?" The people got discouraged and they said, "You know, he's right. We don't have any gold or silver. We don't have anything to make this temple beautiful. What's the use? Why work?" So they quit.

**Roper:** Haggai uses a very interesting word-play in this passage. He says, in the Hebrew, that he was the messenger of the Lord, and he spoke the message, and the people did the message. That is, they did what they were commanded to do. They went up onto the mountain-I suppose the Mount of Olives-and cut down trees, brought back the wood, and began to rebuild. The interior of the temple had been gutted by fire, but the walls were still there. All they had to do was rebuild the wooden portion. So they got lumber and went to work. It took them three weeks to clear away the debris, but they did it. They did the message. And the Lord said, "If you do it, I'll be with you."

**Mackay:** In this brief section he tells how his proclamation evoked a positive response from the community. There seems to have been three stages: an immediate response on August 29<sup>th</sup> when he first spoke (1:12); a further strengthening of their resolve at an unspecified later date (1:13-14a); and the actual commencement of the work three weeks later on 21<sup>st</sup> September (1:14b-15). Throughout it is emphasized that this change of attitude did not occur apart from the transforming work of God within them.

**Mackay:** God repeatedly uses the promise of his presence to encourage those whom he has called to particular tasks where they will feel pressure and be exposed to danger. This was the message he brought to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:12), to Joshua when he succeeded Moses as the leader of Israel (Josh. 1:5), to Jeremiah when he called him to be a prophet in hard times (Jer. 1:8, 19). It is with the same message that Jesus ends the Great Commission, "*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age*" (Mt. 28:20). Grasping this promise and all that it involves gives the confidence needed for the tasks that lie ahead of us, as much as it did for the Jews of Haggai's generation when they acted with renewed obedience and faced up to rebuilding the Temple. Notice that this promise comes to encourage them after they had inwardly returned to the Lord and resolved to act. "*The Lord is with you when you are with him*" (2 Chr. 15:2) always acts as a condition for the enjoyment of this blessing.

TEXT: Haggai 2:1-9

TITLE: MESSAGE 2 – COUNT ON GOD’S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS PROMISES AS YOU BOLDLY LABOR FOR HIM – DON’T GET DISCOURAGED

**BIG IDEA:**

**EVALUATE PRESENT REALITIES NOT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PAST PERFORMANCE BUT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FUTURE PROMISES OF MILLENNIAL GLORY AND BLESSING**

**INTRODUCTION:**

We are always evaluating what God is doing in the present – in our personal situation . . . in the context of our ministry and our local church situation. The problem is that we lack God’s *Big Picture Perspective* that can put the present in its proper context. Remember the message of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:1-5 where he cautions us against a wrong type of judging. We can get easily discouraged when we make the wrong types of comparisons and come to the wrong conclusions. God’s program encompasses all of history . . . and we cannot possibly know the value of our service before the proper time for evaluation = when the Lord returns. We need to have a forward-looking mindset that counts on God’s faithfulness to His promises – in particular here = those involving future millennial glory and blessing. For the amillennial camp, this will be a struggle. That is why there is such a practical life-based component to what you believe about eschatology. It does matter and it does impact how you live in the present.

Our present circumstances or ministry might not seem all that significant. But God speaks to us as *the Lord of hosts*, the one commanding the army that will ultimately be victorious over all. We are not alone; God’s presence and favor and protection and blessing are with us. What we are doing is making a difference. We need to take courage and persevere in the Lord’s work. God makes the connection between what looks like our meager contribution of obedience and sacrificial service and His promise to bring in a reign of prosperity and peace and dominion where His glory will shine forth abundantly throughout the entire world.

**(:1-2) CONTEXT: MESSAGE #2 FROM GOD TO HIS LOYAL WORKERS**

A. Date Stamp

“*On the twenty-first of the seventh month,*”

**MacArthur:** This day in the month of Tishri corresponds to Oct. 17, 520 B.C. Leviticus 23:39-44 indicates that this was the final day of the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles, a feast to celebrate God’s provision for Israel during her 40 years of wilderness wanderings and give thanks for a bountiful harvest.

**Hanko:** This prophecy would have been delivered on the last day of the feast of tabernacles (Lev. 23:34-42). This is of more than passing interest in view of the fact

that the feast celebrated Israel's deliverance from Egypt, to which God himself makes reference in the verses that follow. That deliverance would have been on the minds of the people, therefore, and must have made them wonder whether God was really with them as he had been in the days when they came out of Egypt. Then they were a great host, now they were but a remnant. Then they had been on their way to a land flowing with milk and honey, now they were having difficulty even subsisting in the land.

**Taylor:** Less than two months had elapsed from the time of Haggai's first message when work on the temple stalled due to discouragement on the part of the participants.

B. Prophetic Message #2

*"the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet saying"*

C. Same Audience

*"speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people saying"*

**I. (:3-5) PAST FAILURES MUST NOT DISTRACT US FROM BOLDLY FULFILLING OUR PRESENT MINISTRY IN RELIANCE UPON THE ALL-SUFFICIENT RESOURCE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD**

A. (:3) The Reminders of Blown Opportunities in the Past Can Discourage Us

3 Rhetorical Questions Exposing Potential for Discouragement

1. Longing for the Good Old Days

*"Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory?"*

The glory days of the reign of Solomon and the magnificence of the former temple were lost on account of the rebellion and idolatry of God's people.

2. Looking at Every Flaw

*"And how do you see it now?"*

3. Letting Discouragement Overwhelm You

*"Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?"*

Danger: don't ever belittle or minimize the value of obedience.

**Hanko:** The Jews traditionally listed five things lacking in the second temple: (1) the ark with its mercy seat; (2) the holy fire which burned perpetually in the candlesticks and on the altar (Lev. 6:8-13; 24:2); (3) the cloud of glory (I Kings 8:10, 11); (4) the spirit of prophecy; and (5) the Urim and Thummim (Ezra 2:63). Certainly we can agree that four of these five were indeed lacking (the spirit of prophecy did not depart until after Malachi's work was finished). That this temple was lacking in glory in comparison to Solomon's was evident already when the foundation were laid. Then the older people who had seen and remembered Solomon's temple wept bitterly (Ezra 3:12, 13). . .

Why was it, though, that God was satisfied with a house that was only a poor shadow of the house Solomon had built? You would think that God would want the most beautiful temple possible, and that he would have supplied the Jews with gold, silver, precious stones and woods, so that his house be more beautiful than any kingly palace. Why did he remind the Jews of the poverty of this house and do nothing to change that?

The answer to these questions is that Christ was coming and the people had to start looking away from the earthly types and shadows to Christ himself. It would be only a little while before the Desire of all nations would come, and they had to be ready. Haggai 2:9 is a promise of the coming of Christ. He is the true temple of God because he is Immanuel, God with us, the fulfillment of all God's promises to dwell with his people.

B. (:4-5) The Reassurance of the Presence of God Motivates Bold Ministry  
2 Simple Responsibilities Coupled with 1 All Sufficient Divine Provision

Note the chiasmic structure of these 2 verses

1A. 2 Simple Responsibilities

*"take courage"*

*"work"*

1B. 1 All Sufficient Divine Provision = Promise of the Lord's Presence  
Alongside

*"For I am with you." declares the Lord of hosts"*

1B. 1 All Sufficient Divine Provision = Promise of the Spirit's Presence  
Within

*"As for the promise which I made you when you came out of  
Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst"*

1A. 2 Simple Responsibilities

*"Do not fear!"*

Implied: Work!

**Taylor:** Haggai's point is that just as the Lord covenanted to be with Israel as far back as the exodus event, and just as his presence had been evident throughout their prior history, so now the community should confidently face their difficulties in the enabling power of the Spirit and free from the paralysis of fear about the future. Haggai's exhortation not to fear has its biblical roots in military language. Warriors were often admonished in this way prior to engaging in battle. Given the similarity in wording between the admonition in Hag 2:5 and the one in 1 Chr 28:20, Haggai may be drawing on the instructions David gave to his people prior to the building of the Solomonic temple.

## **II. (:6-9) FUTURE PROMISES OF MILLENNIAL BLESSING AND GLORY GIVE HOPE TO THE LORD'S LABORERS -- 3 ASPECTS OF ESTABLISHING THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF THE MESSIAH**

A. (:6-7a) Judgmental Preparation = **Shaking the Universe** with Cataclysmic Phenomena

*“For thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. I will shake all the nations’”*

The Lord is not finished yet with working out His plan to introduce His kingdom of righteousness and peace on this earth. He has more left in his arsenal. He has not yet fired all of His bullets. We are already in the last days and His preparatory judgment is coming soon. The nations may seem arrogant and independent of His rule right now; but they will soon be shaken.

B. (:7b-8) Sovereign Glorification – **Filling the Temple** with Glory and Prosperity

*“and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,” says the Lord of hosts. ‘The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,’ declares the Lord of hosts.”*

**Ryrie:** The well-known translation “*the desire of all nations*” (KJV) makes this a reference to Messiah and is in accord with Jewish tradition. However, many feel that the phrase is more properly translated, as here, *the wealth* (precious things) *of all nations*, referring to the offerings the nations will bring to the millennial Temple. The *glory* may refer to the splendor of the Temple or to the presence of the Lord in it.

All that is of value belongs to the Lord anyway. The nations boast in their wealth and prosperity . . . but they will end up laying everything at the feet of the Master of the Universe.

C. (:9) Supreme Dominion – **Reigning in Glory** and Administering Peace

1. Proper Perspective of Comparison = Supreme Glory

*“The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,” says the Lord of hosts,”*

Go ahead and make comparison now to Solomon’s temple. No comparison!

2. Peaceful Administration

*“and in this place I will give peace,” declares the Lord of hosts.”*

Trace all of the OT references to the peace that will be instituted in the reign of the Messiah in the millennial kingdom.

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What were some of the discouragements the people needed to overcome to persevere in rebuilding the temple? What were some of the distractions and threats? Why would the Lord make a point to draw the people's attention to the inferiority of this temple?
- 2) Why does the Lord always lay on us the responsibility of "taking courage" rather than promising to infuse us with courage?
- 3) What does the promise of the presence of the Lord signify?
- 4) Are we presently being good stewards of the silver and gold entrusted to us (material possessions) – recognizing that they all belong to the Lord?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Taylor:** Haggai begins this message by tackling the source of the people's discouragement, namely, the unimpressive condition of the present temple as compared to the wonder of Solomon's temple. The section makes two main points. First, in what has been described as "a tactically brilliant maneuver" on the part of a skilled politician, the prophet acknowledges that the present temple is in an unenviable condition. Concerning this there was no basis for dispute. This structure was but a faded and dim shadow of that former one that had been the pride of a nation. Second, the prophet indicates that the antidote to discouragement lies in reflection on the Lord's continued presence, as evidenced in his prior salvific deeds in behalf of his people. As Zechariah would later say, they should not despise the *day of small things* (Zech 4:10). Persistent obedience to God's calling for them would be accompanied by the enabling blessing of his presence for the accomplishment of things greater than they could imagine. They should forge ahead with their work, drawing strength from the Lord's invigorating presence with them.

#### **Keathley:**

The Promise of His Presence (2:1-5)

"... for I am with you" (vs 4) - This phrase goes back to Ex 19:4-6; 29:45; 33:12f, and Isa 63:11-14. In those passages you have God promising Moses that He would be with the Israelites. The Isaiah passage says it was the Spirit of God in their midst that protected and provided for them. What did God do before Nebuchadnezzar came in to take over Jerusalem? The glory of the Lord left the temple (Ezek 10:18-19). When Israel goes into captivity the Lord asks, "Where's the Holy Spirit now?" But now God is back and the presence of the Lord should give them courage. Thus he

says in verse 5, “Do not fear!”

What is the secret to doing the work of God? It is the presence of God. Like we talked about in the last section, it is the Spirit of God.

This is the same motivation we have in the New Testament. Matt 28:20 says, “Make disciples of all nations... for I am with you to the end of the age.”

This is the same principle we see in Rom 7-8 where Paul talks about failure to do the work of God in chapter 7 because he is trying to do it with his own power. But in chapter 8 he succeeds because he draws on the Spirit’s power.

Amazing continuity!

**Principle:** Courage comes from knowing that God is present (2:1-4) cf. Heb 13:5-6

**Malick:** Encouragement to Build In View of Future Glory (October 520 B.C.): On 17 October 520 the Lord of Hosts spoke through Haggai to encourage the people and their leaders in their building of the new temple even through it appears slight compared to the former temple because He is with them in accordance with His promises and because this temple will be even more glorious than the former temple when He shakes the nations, they bring their possessions to Him, His glory fills the House, and He brings peace 2:1-9

**Mackay:** It is still very easy in building the kingdom of God, the Temple of New Testament times, to be overcome by pessimism, seeing only the problems and not the possibilities. What has the church managed to achieve since it was given its commission by Christ? But unless we start, unless we try, what can come but failure? The way forward is to act in faith.

It also requires that we act with values determined by God’s perspective. It is not a matter of grand structures or visible splendour. The church is not assessed in this way. It is a matter of lives dedicated to him.

This can be achieved by the presence of the Spirit. Paul may plant the seed and Apollos water it, but the growth is from God alone (1 Cor. 3:6). Let us not discount our greatest asset.

**Jeff Strite:** Why? Why should they remain strong?

Because: they had taken a good hard look at the temple they’d built and it so frustrated them that they’ve literally put down their tools and stopped working. They asked themselves: “why bother?”

And at the heart of their frustration was fear.

They were afraid that God didn’t love them anymore and wasn’t going to be with them anymore.

And so God says “my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.” Haggai 2:5

They're afraid because they didn't have enough money.  
And so God tells them, don't worry about the money: 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine' Haggai 2:8

And they were afraid because they don't think God will bless them as He has in past.  
And so God lets them in on a secret:  
"I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory," says the LORD Almighty... "The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house," says the LORD Almighty. "And in this place I will grant peace," declares the LORD Almighty. Haggai 2:7 & 9

Essentially God is telling His people:  
Don't be deceived by appearances.  
Don't let the reality you're looking at right now affect your obedience to Me.  
[www.sermoncentral.com](http://www.sermoncentral.com)

**Piper:** The workers are discouraged because the memory is still alive of how glorious the temple used to be. Less than 70 years ago it stood in this very spot, the apple of God's eye, the magnificent achievement of Solomon, for centuries the center of holy worship. But instead of inspiring the people, this memory made the people look at the pitiful edifice they were building and feel hopeless. "How do you see it now? Is it not in your sight as nothing?" What's the use, they say. We can't match the glory of Solomon's temple. We're wasting our time. Nothing beautiful or worthwhile will ever come of it. We got along without it in Babylon; we can do without it here. Better to have the beauty of a great memory than a paltry imitation. So their hands are slack in the work. . .

In other words, take courage, work and fear not, because you build more than you see. All you see is a paltry temple. But God promises to take your work, fill it with his glory and make your labors with a million times more than you ever imagined.

**Steven J. Cole:** God's Encouragement for Discouraged Servants

**1. God understands and cares about the discouragement we face in serving Him (2:1-3).**

- A. The loss of initial excitement can discourage us.
- B. Delays can discourage us.
- C. Outside opposition and criticism can discourage us.
- D. Inside pessimism, comparisons, and faulty expectations can discourage us.
- E. A wrong view of success can discourage us.

**2. God's word to us when we discouraged in serving Him is to persevere (2:4a).**

- A. Perseverance requires the right attitude: Be strong!
- B. Perseverance requires the right action: Work!

**3. God assures us when we are discouraged in serving Him by His presence, His promise, and His prophecy (2:4b-9).**

- A. God assures us when we are discouraged in serving Him by His presence (2:4b).
- B. God assures us when we are discouraged in serving Him



by His promise (2:5).

C. God assures us when we are discouraged in serving Him  
by His prophecies (2:6-9).

**David Legge:** The Best is Yet to Come

***Haggai 2:1-9***

1. A Backward Look - God's Old Temple (verses 1-3)
2. An Upward Look - God's Presence and Promise (verses 4-5)
3. A Forward Look - God's Prophecies (verses 6-9)

TEXT: Haggai 2:10-19

TITLE: MESSAGE 3 – CONSECRATE YOURSELF AND GOD WILL BLESS YOUR SERVICE

**BIG IDEA:**  
**HOLINESS IS A PREREQUISITE TO ACCEPTABLE SERVICE AND THE BLESSING OF GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Sin has a contaminating effect on everything around it. We deceive ourselves if we imagine that we can come before God and please Him in any way apart from first consecrating ourselves. In fact God has made it clear that He will not bless religious activity or sacrificial offerings or energetic ministry that does not flow out of a life that has first been consecrated to Him. But the encouraging message is that God has committed Himself to bless the service of those who put a priority on holiness. We might not see the abundant fruit immediately; but as we are patient and persevere, God will abundantly bless. There is a direct connection between obedience and God's blessing.

**(:10) SETTING**

A. Date Stamp

*“On the twenty-fourth of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius”*

B. Prophetic Message #3

*“the word of the Lord came to Haggai the prophet, saying”*

Simple Outline:

- I. Object Lesson
- II. Historical Example

**I. (:11-14) THE OBJECT LESSON POINTS TO THE PREREQUISITE OF HOLINESS BEFORE ANY SERVICE CAN BE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD**

A. (:11) Object Lesson Introduced

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Ask now the priests for a ruling:’”*

**Taylor:** The distinctions alluded to in Jer 18:18 (ESV) are also instructive in this regard:

*“For the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet.”*

Although there is overlap in the domains described in this verse, it seems that teaching of the Torah is especially associated with the priestly community, life instruction with the community of wise men, and revelation with the prophetic guild. Thus the verdict of the priests on the matter posed by Haggai's questions would be regarded as authoritative.

**Stedman:** This was in accordance with the law of Moses. If you get into a situation, Moses said, where you do not know what to do, go ask the priest to declare the appropriate principle and then make an application from that. It is the same thing we are told to do. When you get into a situation that you do not know how to handle, go to the word of God and get the principle that covers that situation.

B. (:12-13) Object Lesson Illustrated Via 2 Contrasting Questions

1. (:12) Question #1 -- Is Holiness Contagious? NO

*“If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any other food, will it become holy?’ And the priests answered, ‘No.’”*

2. (:13) Question #2 – Is Uncleanness Contagious? YES

*“The Haggai said, ‘If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these, will the latter become unclean?’ And the priests answered, ‘It will become unclean.’”*

What happens if we immerse ourselves so deeply in the culture that we are the ones changed? Don't deceive yourself; you cannot take fire into your bosom without being burned.

C. (:14) Object Lesson Applied – Unholy Sacrifices Are Worthless to God-- God's People Must Put a Priority on Consecration

*“Then Haggai said, ‘So is this people. And so is this nation before Me,’ declares the Lord, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.’”*

**Ryrie:** The point of these two questions is this: Sanctification or cleanness cannot be transferred, but defilement can (just as health is not contagious, but disease can be). The disobedience of the people was like a dead thing in their midst, contaminating all of them (v. 14).

**Taylor:** The question to be answered is this: How can an impure people engage in a holy task? Will not their contagious condition of impurity render impure everything with which they come in contact?

**II. (:15-19) THE HISTORICAL EXAMPLE REINFORCES THE OBJECT LESSON – HOLINESS IS A PREREQUISITE TO ACCEPTABLE SERVICE AND THE BLESSING OF GOD**

A. (:15-17) Sin Brings Discipline to Motivate Repentance

1. (:15) Reflect

*“But now, do consider from this day onward; before one stone was placed on another in the temple of the Lord”*

2. (:16) Recount the Frustration of Past Discipline

*“from that time when one came to a grain heap of twenty measures, there would be only ten; and when one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there would be only twenty.”*

Expectations constantly frustrated

**Feinberg:** Even though the people had been neglecting the work of the Temple, they had been offering sacrifices on an improvised altar at Jerusalem (Ezr 3:3). These offerings had not been pleasing to the Lord; therefore God had withheld his blessing from the people, as is clearly seen in chapter 1.

3. (:17) Respond in Repentance to the Discipline of the Lord

*“I smote you and every work of your hands with blasting wind, mildew and hail; yet you did not come back to Me,” declares the Lord.”*

**Lindsey:** *Blight* (crop disease) and *mildew* are linked in several passages that deal with divine judgment for disobedience (cf. Deut. 28:22; 1 Kings 8:37; 2 Chron. 6:28; Amos 4:9). *Hail* also occurs in many judgment passages (Ex. 9:25; Isa. 28:2; 30:30). For an agricultural society such punishments were catastrophic to the economy and to survival.

**Taylor:** All these misfortunes had befallen the people of Judah. None of them could be adequately explained as mere coincidence. In v. 17 the Lord takes credit for all of these problems, attributing them to initiatives that he himself had taken.

B. (:18-19) Obedience Brings Blessing to Motivate Abundant Service

1. (:18) Reflect

*“Do consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month; from the day when the temple of the Lord was founded, consider:”*

2. (:19a) Recount the Harvest Law

*“Is the seed still in the barn? Even including the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree, it has not borne fruit.”*

Go to the barn and check out the situation – what type of harvest had been gathered in previous years?

**Lindsey:** The drought of divine judgment had already affected the year’s harvest so that their barns were already emptied of the sparse harvest. They had neither staples (seed, or grapes, or olives) nor luxuries (figs and pomegranates).

3. (:19b) Respond in Obedience to Benefit from God’s Promised Blessing

*“Yet from this day on I will bless you.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How is the error of ritualism refuted in this passage? Do you know people who seem to place a sanctifying relationship on liturgical observances?
- 2) How can we spend time reflecting on God's dealings with us and on our present level of consecration? What are some practical suggestions for such times of meditation?
- 3) What type of discipline has the Lord applied to our life? How have we responded?
- 4) How gracious is the Lord towards us to extend this invitation to repent and once again be in position to receive His promised blessing – despite past disobedience?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur:** The message sought to demonstrate that while their disobedience caused God's blessings to be withheld, their obedience would cause His blessings to be released.

To provide an analogy or object lesson for the people, two questions were asked of the priests relative to ceremonial law. The first question was intended to show that ceremonial cleanness cannot be transferred (v.12), while the second question showed that ceremonial uncleanness can be transferred (v. 13). Haggai then applied the lesson (v. 14). Even though the people had been bringing their offerings while neglecting the rebuilding of the temple, their offerings had not been acceptable. Their sin had caused their sacrifices to be contaminated and ineffectual. And their good works, their offerings, could not transmit cleanness. In other words, sin is contagious, righteousness is not (cf. 1 Sa 15:22; Hos 6:6).

**Piper:** Things have not gone well. Evidently the attitude of the people is that mere contact with the temple makes them clean in God's sight while, in fact, they are living in sin. The holiness of the temple is not rubbing off on them. On the contrary, their sin is desecrating the temple. That's the meaning of verses 11-14, a kind of parable applied in v. 14 to the people like this: "So it is with this people and with this nation before me, says the Lord; and so with every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean." So, even though they have begun to obey the Lord by working on the temple, their work is unclean because of sin in their lives.

So what Haggai does in response to this imperfect obedience is point the people back to the great turning point in their experience when they began to work on the temple. Verses 15-17 tell the people to consider what they should do now in view of how life was for them before they started building the temple. "Pray now, consider what will

come to pass from this day on (i.e., how you should live now, remembering) ... I smote you and all the products of your toil with blight and mildew and hail; yet you did not return to me, says the Lord." In other words, recall how miserable and frustrated you were in your disobedience before you began to lay stone on stone in the temple. The implication is: surely it is utter folly to go on in sin now, if it cost so much then. So verses 15-17 call the people to consider what they should do now in view of how life was for them before they started building the temple.

Verses 18-19 are more positive: they call the people to consider how they should live now in view of how life has been for them (not before but) since they began to build the temple. "Since that day," the prophet asks in verse 19, "is the seed yet in the barn? Do the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree still yield nothing? From this day on I will bless you." I think what he means is this: it has only been three months since you began to build. The seed is not in the barn but in the ground. The time for fruit-bearing is coming. I am not against you. I am for you and will help you. So consider your ways. Cleanse your hands, and keep working on my house. I promise to bless you.

**P. G. Mathew:** The third message of Haggai had a backward look. The underlying question was why had God not blessed his people, who came to Jerusalem about 538 B.C. according to his direction? God had stirred the hearts of these people, as we read in Ezra 1:5, to return to Jerusalem for the specific purpose of rebuilding the temple. They were also responding to the decree of Cyrus that whoever wanted could return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

When the people arrived in Jerusalem, they built an altar right away and began to offer sacrifices. They laid the foundation for the temple, but when they faced opposition from the enemies, these people who had come back under the direction of God and in accordance with the decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple, acted in unbelief and sinful fear, as we read in Ezra 4:24. They abandoned the temple construction and began to concentrate their attention on their own self-interests. This situation continued for sixteen years, from 536 B.C. to 520 B.C., until God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to exhort the people to begin building again.

What were these people were saying during this period of self-seeking? "It is not yet time to build the house of God." They were saying, "It is not yet time to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. It is not yet time to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength."

But although these people were not building God's house, they were busy. What were they doing in the meantime? Building luxurious, paneled houses for themselves. Throughout this time, for sixteen years, they also continued to offer sacrifices upon the altar they had built when they first came. But these sacrifices were not accepted by God and the people were not experiencing God's blessing because of their disobedience.

## ***Disobedience Renders Worship Unacceptable***

God was not pleased with the prayers and worship of his people because they had abandoned the work on the temple. This is the teaching of Haggai 2:11-14. It says that holiness is incommunicable, but contamination is very communicable. For example, a father cannot communicate his health to his sick child, but his sick child can communicate his illness to the father. The meat of sacrifice cannot confer its holiness to anything that it touches, such as bread, wine, or oil., but an unclean person who touches a dead body can make these things--bread, wine, oil, or the meat of sacrifice--unclean.

Haggai applied this priestly wisdom to the lives of the people of Israel, to explain to them why God had not blessed them, and we must apply it to our own lives as well. When a disobedient and unbelieving person worships God, no matter how much he prays, his worship will not be accepted by God because the evil of his heart renders that worship unacceptable to God. God abhors externalism and outward worship. He is interested in our hearts being right with him.

In Psalm 51:17 David speaks of the sacrifices desired by God: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." In other words, God will accept the broken and contrite heart. In Isaiah 57:15 God makes a similar statement: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."

God is more interested in our hearts than in any external sacrifices. In 1 Samuel 15:22-23 Samuel told King Saul, "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king."

In Genesis 4 we notice that Abel and Cain both offered sacrifices to God, but God rejected Cain's sacrifice. Cain's heart was evil and he did not believe in God. Because his sacrifice was rejected, Cain became angry and his face fell. But God came to Cain in grace and told him, "You do the right thing. If you offer sacrifices according to my word and faith, with a good heart that loves God, they shall be accepted and your face will be lifted up. Just do what is right."

Cain knew what was right, but he refused to do it because he was a rebel and a wicked man. Even though God spoke to him in grace, he rejected God's counsel, and his refusal cost him God's blessing.

What about us? When God does not accept our worship, haven't we questioned him, saying, "Why didn't you accept my worship? Why are you not pleased with it? Why didn't you bless me?"--not realizing that the problem is our own disobedience.

Jesus spoke about this also in Matthew 5:21-24: "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." Suppose you did something wrong to your brother, but then you go to

worship in the church. Your heart is evil, but you pay no attention to it, and you begin to praise and pray to God. What does God say? "I will not accept your worship until your heart is right. Go and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." The understanding is that once your heart is right, your gift will be accepted and you will be blessed.

May God help us to pay attention to this! Acceptable worship is worship that results in God being pleased and your being blessed. God desires that we offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, but that includes having clean hearts before God. Only when our hearts are clean can we worship God acceptably. Only then will he bless us.

[http://www.gracevalley.org/sermon\\_trans/2000/Time\\_to\\_Bless.html](http://www.gracevalley.org/sermon_trans/2000/Time_to_Bless.html)

**Taylor:** The agricultural staples of this society – grapes, figs, pomegranates, and olives – had not yielded the essential harvests the people depended on annually. Without a successful yield of these agricultural staples there would be major disruptions to everyday life. It was the vine (v. 19) that produced grapes for the making of wine. The fig was used in making cakes and also in wine. The pomegranate was used for making wine and certain dyes. The olive provided oil used for cooking and fuel source for lamps. Each of these products was essential for maintaining the lifestyle with which Haggai's audience was familiar. All of these hardships – brought about by the failure of the people to seek a right relationship with the Lord – remained as painful reminders of their short-sighted choices. Though conditions might seem insurmountable, the prophet holds out hope for the future.

The sermon concludes on a surprisingly optimistic note of promise. The prophet sees in the people evidences of genuine repentance and turning to the Lord, in light of which there is the prospect of great hope for the days ahead. The people could take comfort in the promise of the Lord's renewed blessing and the attendant reversal of conditions of economic hardship. Once again the Lord would work in their behalf. The final words of v. 19 are these: *"From this day on I will bless you."* This blessing would have temporal and tangible dimensions, since it refers primarily to renewed productivity of the land as a result of the Lord's lifting the agricultural and economic curses that had come due to the people's disobedience. But their future was brighter than their past. As surely as the deuteronomic curses had dogged the heels of their half-hearted commitment to covenant responsibilities, just as surely the Lord's blessings would reward their renewed faithfulness to those obligations. His blessings would accompany the obedience of his people.

**MacArthur:** It's possible to be overexposed to our culture's dark side. I don't think anyone can survive full immersion in today's entertainments and remain spiritually healthy.

Let's face it: Many of the world's favorite fads are toxic, and they are becoming increasingly so as our society descends further in its spiritual death-spiral. It's like a radioactive toxicity, so while those who immerse themselves in it might not notice its



effects instantly, they nevertheless cannot escape the inevitable, soul-destroying contamination. And woe to those who become comfortable with the sinful fads of secular society.

Grunge Christianity? <<http://www.sfpulpit.com/2006/12/11/grunge-christianity/>>

**Hanko:** The principle that is illustrated by the this first question and answer applies in other everyday circumstances and relationships of life. In marriage between a believer and unbeliever, for example, the believer may have no expectation that his own holiness will be transferred to the unbeliever simply by virtue of the fact that they marry. Those who sin by marrying unbelievers often justify what they do on the ground that their marrying the unbeliever will have a good influence on the unbeliever, but that is a vain hope in light of this Word of God. Holiness is not transferred in that way.

We learn that same principle in the rearing of our children. Our own personal holiness and the holiness of godly and pious family life is not automatically transferred to every child who is born in a covenant home. Holiness does not come in that way, no more than it did in the case that Haggai cites to the priests.

**Steven J. Cole:** Seek First His Righteousness

**1. God will grant true blessing when we put His house first (2:15-19).**

A. When we do not put God's house first, He brings discipline into our lives.

B. When we do put God's house first, He truly blesses us.

(1) God's blessing is the most important thing in life's labors.

(2) True blessing does not mean that God removes our problems, but rather that He grants His presence in our problems and His promises for eternity.

**2. God blesses those who put His house first from holy lives (2:10-14).**

A. Holiness is not contagious, but corruption is.

B. God will not bless a cause, no matter how great (*e.g.* the temple), unless the people involved in it are holy.

C. Holiness that pleases God must be inward, not just outward.

**David Legge:** Bringing God's Blessing Down

***Haggai 2:10-19***

1. You Need To Confess (verses 10-14)
2. You Need To Be Holy (verses 10-14)
3. You Need To Examine Self (verses 15-18)
4. You Need To Be Blessed (verse 19)

TEXT: Haggai 2:20-23

TITLE: MESSAGE #4 – CROWN THE SERVANT OF THE LORD THE VICTORIOUS MESSIAH

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE SOVEREIGN GOD WILL EXALT HIS CHOSEN KING TO RULE OVER ALL NATIONS AND KINGDOMS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This passage is addressed to Zerubbabel. But the language goes way beyond anything that was fulfilled in his day. Yes, there was a near term fulfillment in Zerubbabel being raised up as a type of the Son of David who would come to rule in the end times. But the prophet is looking forward to that eschatological day of the Lord when the kingdoms of this earth will be overthrown and God's purpose for history will be realized in the coronation of the Messiah, the Servant of the Lord, the chosen One who will reign in the Millennial Kingdom.

There remains much labor to be undertaken to further the kingdom of God. There are many spiritual battles that must be fought. There are many hardships to be endured. There is a need for great perseverance. But this is not a postmill picture of Christians gradually bringing about the spread of the kingdom until it takes over the world. This does not sound like an amill picture of the church reigning over all enemies today. Instead, here we get a majestic glimpse at God's end game premillennial strategy. It will be sudden and it will be cataclysmic. The curtain is rolled back and we are allowed to gaze upon the final scene of human history. The losers are exposed as weak and defenseless before the Lord of hosts who comes as the conquering warrior. The Servant of the Lord is elevated as the one chosen from all eternity to rule the kingdom of God on earth. There should be no surprises on that final day. The script is here for anyone to read.

Our privilege today is to:

- **Check our priorities** to make sure we are giving full attention to what really matters;
  - **Commit whole-heartedly to the work of the Lord**, knowing that we labor on the winning team in performing tasks that have eternal significance;
  - **Consecrate ourselves** entirely to the Lord so that He can release His abundant blessing on our labors;
  - Anticipate the **Crowning of the Messiah** as King over God's Kingdom on earth.
- MARANTHA!

There are 3 charges to us – things that we are commanded to do. But most importantly will be what God has promised to do on our behalf. He will Crown His chosen one as the signet ring who will rule in majesty and power. Those are the 4 messages comprising the book of Haggai.

**(:20-21a) SETTING FOR MESSAGE #4**

A. Prophetic Message #4

*“Then the word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai . . . saying”*

B. Date Stamp

*“On the twenty-fourth day of the month”*

**Mackay:** This introduction parallels that of 2:10, both messages being given on 18<sup>th</sup> December 520 B.C., the day when there was a formal ceremony in the Temple ruins to mark the resumption of the restoration work.

C. Target Audience

*“Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying”*

Only Zerubbabel singled out this time

**Roper:** Zerubbabel was the political leader, the governor of Judah. He was the grandson of the last legitimate king of Judah, Jehoiachin. He was in the line of succession that led from David down through all the kings of Judah, right on through to Messiah, if you read the genealogies in the New Testament. In terms of the blood line, he had the right to the throne.

**Taylor:** Like many other Old Testament promises, these predictions had both a near dimension and a more distant one. Haggai’s promises given to Zerubbabel, while true of him in a limited way, find their ultimate expression in a greater Zerubbabel who was to come. It is not surprising that in the genealogies of Jesus provided by Matthew and Luke, Zerubbabel is mentioned as part of the messianic line.

## **I. (:21b-22) THE DEFEAT OF ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE NATIONS – FOUR PROMISES OF DESTRUCTION ACCOMPLISHED BY GOD HIMSELF**

(Note repeated use of the first person – the Lord’s personal initiative and sovereign accomplishment is in view)

A. (:21b) Rocking the Entire World

*“I am going to shake the heavens and the earth.”*

**Mackay:** But the shaking is more than a physical response to the Lord’s intervention. What is referred to is the action of the Lord upsetting not so much the physical framework of the universe, but those political and social structures that seemed so oppressive to the Jews. All was under his control, and he would act to ensure that the domination exerted against them would come to an end. It is the Lord who acts on a universal scale for the sake of the house of David and for the good of his people.

B. (:22a) Overthrowing All Thrones

*“I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms”*

**Mackay:** It is the Lord’s prerogative and power to cause kingdoms to fall (Ps. 46:6; Dan. 4:34-35; 5:26).

C. (:22b) Destroying All Power

*“and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations;”*

D. (:22c) Defeating All Opposition

*“and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, everyone by the sword of another.”*

**Feinberg:** The destruction begun by the Lord will be brought to a conclusion through the insanity of civil strife (see also Ezk 38:21; Zech 14:13). These events are to be set in the days of the War of Armageddon. By no stretch of the imagination can the events of this verse be twisted to fit into some past conflicts or political movements of once-great empires. . . David’s secure throne is here contrasted with the tottering dynasties of the world.

## **II. (:23) THE ENTHRONEMENT OF THE MESSIAH TO RULE OVER THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH**

A. Timing of the Messiah’s Enthronement

*“On that day,’ declares the Lord of hosts”*

B. Targeting of the Messiah’s Prefiguration

*“I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant,’ declares the Lord”*

C. Trumpeting of the Messiah’s Majesty

*“I will make you like a signet ring”*

**Roper:** But you may recall that Jeremiah had said to Jehoiachin *“I will strip you like a signet ring [the same term] from my finger, and none of your descendants will ever sit on the throne,”* because of Jehoiachin's wickedness. But God says to Zerubbabel, who was a descendant of Jehoiachin, and who knew that he never would have power to rule, that though he would not reign over Judah (And that was true; he went back to Babylon and perished.), he would have power and authority to rule within his own life, and within the sphere of the responsibility given to him. The Jews knew that ultimately this prophecy was to be fulfilled in Messiah. All the Jewish commentaries looked to Zerubbabel as a type of the One who was to come, the king of Israel, who would reign to the end of time, whose kingdom would never be shaken, who would always have authority. He would be like a signet ring on the Lord's hand. A signet ring is a symbol of authority; kings never took it off. And Haggai says, *“Zerubbabel, that's what you'll be. You'll be secure, you'll be strong. Everything else will be shaken, but your kingdom won't be shaken.”*

D. Testifying to the Messiah’s Election

*“for I have chosen you,’ declares the Lord of hosts.”*

Nobody has a problem with **election** in this context – when it involves God the Father sovereignly choosing to elevate His own Son to be the King over His kingdom on earth. Why do they have a problem with God exercising His sovereign choice in other contexts?

**Mackay:** This choice is not an arbitrary act of God, but a selection determined by his good pleasure as one that will further his purposes.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of *shaking* of the heavens and the earth is pictured in the book of Revelation?
- 2) What do we learn about the nature of the Messiah from this passage?
- 3) What is the significance here of the use of the name of God as “*the Lord of hosts*”?
- 4) What is our emotional response to having been *chosen* by God to reign with His Son, the coming Messiah?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Stedman:** Now here was a special word of encouragement to the leader while the people were yet under the authority of Babylon, although they were back in the land and building the temple again, they were still beset by many problems. Everywhere they looked there was the sign of the authority of the foreign power. They saw chariots everywhere and soldiers marching through the streets and all the signs of bondage, and their hearts grew fearful and they said, "When will it ever be? Are we ever going to be free?"

God says, "Don't worry. I have a program going that will reverse the whole order of things. I will destroy the power of this kingdom. I will bring their chariots to naught. I will break you loose from the bondage of this people and I am going to take Zerubbabel, the man who stands as the leader of the people and make him a signet ring." Now Zerubbabel was of the royal line, the line of David, and though these words were not literally fulfilled in Zerubbabel, they were spoken of his descendent who was Jesus of Nazareth. In Jesus, God fulfilled all these words. He took the son of David and made him a signet ring by which all the nations shall ultimately be ruled.

Now in what way is all this a word to us? It is a word of encouragement in a day of darkness, a word of rising up and acting now. Build now. Do not wait. The work of God needs to be done now. Not next year. Not ten years from now. Now. Are your homes

open? Are your lives ready? A great harvest field is before us here and around the world. Opportunities abound as they never have before. Is this first in your prayers? Is it first in your interests that this great harvest may be reaped? Are your homes open to the students that throng our campuses that they might come to Christ? And to your neighbors so that they can come in and find a friendly heart and a ready smile and a ready ear to listen?

How much are we ready to build the house of the Lord? This is always the key, is it not? This is the work of the Spirit. When all that man has done around us crumbles into nothing and all the vast civilizations and great secrets of nature are forgotten, the one thing that will last is the work of the Lord, the house of God that he is building now. Are we investing in eternal things? That is Haggai's word.

**Roper:** This passage is very significant because of the historical situation at the time. Darius is now king of Persia, having come to the throne just two years before, in 522 B.C. His predecessor was a Persian king named Cambyses, who went insane and killed himself. When he killed himself, the nation erupted in rebellion. From one end of the Persian empire to the other, revolts broke out. Darius spent the first two years of his reign literally fighting for his life. Perhaps you have seen the great monument he had carved on the face of Behistun Mountain, called Behistun Rock. It depicts Darius worshipping the Zoroastrian deity. Underneath is a line of slaves roped together, and one is on his knees. He is Gaumata, a Babylonian king who rebelled against Darius. Darius is shown with his foot on this king's neck, holding him down. Behistun Rock was inscribed in three different languages in commemoration of Darius' victory over all these rebels. For two years Darius had fought, and now by 520 B.C. his kingdom is at peace. Everything is back under his control, Persia is strong and solid, and no one can hope to rebel. During the time this rebellion was taking place, the Jews were thinking, "This is the shaking that is going to destroy the might of these enemies, and then Messiah will come and will give us back our land." But now, suddenly, things are back as they were, and the enemy seems just as powerful, just as formidable as before, and they wonder what has happened, who is in control. . .

And Scripture says so clearly that the same is true of our lives. We are like kings, intended to reign in life over our environment. And just as the Lord himself reigns secure in his kingdom, because he indwells us we will reign secure in our kingdom. Nothing will shake us. Nations may shake around us, and enemies may appear to be very formidable, but God says, "Though I'm going to shake your enemies, you will be secure." In I Peter 5, Peter says, "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered for a little, will himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." And in I Corinthians 15, Paul says that because of the fact of the resurrection life that we have in Christ, we can be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Now that is a word to a ruined generation, to a beaten folk. First, get your priorities in order. Do the first things first. Then, keep moving. Take hold of the Lord and all of his strength. Count on him to accomplish the good work that he has begun in you. And

know that he is going to be faithful to his promises-faithful, not because we deserve it, but because his word is sure, and steadfast, and certain. He will give us authority, he will establish us. And the latter glory of our house will be greater than the former.

**MacArthur**: The signet ring was a symbol of honor, authority, and power (cf. SS 8:6). It corresponded to a king's scepter which was used to seal letters and decrees (cf. 1 Kin 21:8; Est 8:8; Da 6:17). Zerubbabel, as God's signet ring, stands as the official representative of the Davidic dynasty and represents the resumption of the messianic line interrupted by the Exile.

**J. McIlmoyle**: The promise therefore amounts to this: I will count thee most precious and will give thee a position of great authority. Both preservation and preferment are implied. And he owes it all, not to merit but to God's choice.

**F. Duane Lindsey**: Appropriately the last words in Haggai's book are *the Lord Almighty* (cf. comments on Hag. 1:2). The sovereign covenant-God is able to bring about all He promised through Haggai. The temple will be rebuilt and filled with the glory of the Lord. The final Son of David will rule the earth in peace and righteousness. Therefore God's people are to be faithful now to the task to which He has called them.

**Hanko**: The signet of which God speaks is a royal ring, used to seal documents, both to make them tamper-proof and to indicate that they contained the decrees and statutes of the king. It is in that reference to a signet, then, that we find the evidence that God is indeed speaking of the royal line and throne of David. That Zerubbabel is described as a signet is due to the fact that the royal power he represented, is really the power of God himself. He, and all David's descendants were nothing more than that - signets on the hand of the King of kings, evidences of the power of him who had given the throne to David in the first place, the one to whom the throne and all its power belonged.

This promise reverses a previous threat made to Zerubbabel's grandfather, Jehoiachin, also called Jeconiah or Coniah:

*As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence* (Jer. 22:24).

There we see not only that this signet is on the hand of God, whose power and authority the kings of Judah represented like a signet ring, but we see also God's faithfulness to David. To pluck the ring from his hand would be to take the kingdom away from David, and though he removed from David all the trappings and power of the kingdom, he never abandoned his promise, but fulfilled it, and that in a way unlooked for, in Christ. Insofar as this promise applies to Zerubbabel himself, it is a promise that Zerubbabel will be God's representative, the representative of his own divine rule among the people, and that God will use him in the work of rebuilding.

That God promises the coming of Christ as king under the figure of Zerubbabel is clear from the prophecy. Not only is Zerubbabel referred to as a signet but as the servant of Jehovah and as his chosen. Both of these are important names for Christ, especially in

the prophecies of Isaiah to which Haggai very obviously has reference (Is. 41:8, 9; 43:10; 44:1, 2). That these names refer to Christ in the book of Isaiah becomes clear when we realize that the servant passages all climax and come to their conclusion in Isaiah 53 which describe the chosen servant of the Lord in his sufferings.

There is a passage in the New Testament that comes very close to describing Christ in the same terms as he is here described. Hebrews 1:3 speaks of Christ as the express image of the person of God. Those words, “express image” literally describe the stamp or impression left by a signet ring. That is what Christ is as God’s Son come in the flesh, as the bodily representative of God himself.

God speaks of Zerubbabel and through of him of Christ as king, to show how completely he would provide for his people and fulfill the promises that he had made to them. Not only would Christ be the true temple, the Desire of all nations, but he would also be the great temple builder. That was the role of Solomon and of every king of Judah, to rebuild and keep in repair the house of God. Solomon fulfilled that task by building the first temple. Men such as Jehoshaphat and Asa kept the temple open and in repair, and later kings such Hezekiah and Josiah restored it when it had fallen into disrepair. . .

May our prayer be that of Calvin as we consider what Haggai, through the inspiration of the Spirit of God, has written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come:

Grant, Almighty God, that...as thou hast favoured us with so great an honour as to make us the framers and builders of thy spiritual temple, may every one of us present and consecrate himself wholly to thee: and inasmuch as each of us has received some peculiar gift, may we strive to employ it in building this temple, so that thou mayest be worshipped among us perpetually; and especially, may each of us offer himself wholly as a spiritual sacrifice to thee, until we shall at length be renewed in thing image, and be received into a full participation of that glory, which has been attained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen.

**Steven J Cole**: God Will Prevail

**Because the Sovereign Lord will prevail in His eternal plan,  
His servants should be encouraged to trust Him and to do His will.**

**1. The Sovereign Lord will prevail in His eternal plan.**

- A. God has a definite plan for history.
- B. God is mighty to accomplish His plan.
- C. God’s plan is carried out in accordance with His choice.
- D. God’s plan centers on the person of Jesus Christ.
- E. God’s timing for fulfilling His plan is different than our timing.

**2. God’s servants should be encouraged to trust Him and to do His will.**



David Legge: His Day Will Come

***Haggai 2:20-23***

1. The Shaking Of The Earth (verse 21)
2. The Smashing Of Man's Kingdoms (verse 22)
3. The Servant Of Jehovah (verse 23)
4. The Signet Of God's Choosing (verse 23)

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