

“Consider Your Ways”

Haggai 1:1-15

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Introduction: The Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. Following the captivity to Babylon, a remnant of Jews was able to return to their homeland under Zerubbabel (about 50,000). Their first efforts were extended in rebuilding the Temple, which was central not only to their worship, but to their entire way of life. The laying of the foundation is mentioned in Ezra 3:8-10. But when opposition arose from the Samaritans, the Jews ceased their rebuilding. By the time Haggai declares this message, some 15-16 years have passed. The passing of time led to spiritual indifference on the part of the Jews. Wolf comments, "Spiritual paralysis had set in, & it was to arouse them from this lethargy that Haggai emerged with his powerful preaching." Consider Haggai's message (dated "*in the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month*" = August 29, 520 B.C.) in chapter one as we note: (1) the sin of procrastination (:2), (2) the secret of prioritization (:3-11), & (3) the success of participation (:12-15).

I. The **sin of procrastination** (:2)

Possible excuses for not rebuilding the Temple:

A. The time is not right?

1. "What is the hurry?" or "Why change now?"
2. Waiting for the opposition to cease? Or waiting for the 70 years of captivity to expire?

B. The money is not received?

1. "Where's the money going to come from?"
2. Waiting for the economy to improve?

Probably the real reason for not rebuilding the Temple:

C. The people were not ready?

Guilty of one or more of these:

1. They **despised** God, by refusing to obey His Word.
2. They **denied** God, by refusing to offer Him worship.
3. They **deprived** God, by refusing to give Him wealth.

II. The **secret of prioritization** (:3-11)

A. The priority of God's work (:3-5).

Principle #1 > Matthew 6:33, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, & His righteousness, & all these things shall be added unto you.*"

1. Their houses - "*ceiled*" - paneled (with cedar?).
 - a. Not just livable, but luxurious (cf. I Kings 7:3).
 - b. Cedar that was intended for the Temple? (cf. Ezra 3:7).
2. God's house - "*lie(s) waste.*"
 - a. Only the foundation had been laid.
 - b. Their selfishness was exposed. See Morgan's & Phillips' comments.

B. The priority with God's wealth (:6-7 & :9-11).

Principle #2 > Proverbs 3:9-10, "*Honor the Lord with thy substance & with the first-fruits of all thine increase...*"

1. The curse of dissatisfaction:
 - a. Never fully satisfied, content, warm, etc. [Our society today?]
 - b. "How much wealth is enough?" - "A little more than I have right now." (Rockefeller).

2. The curse of deprivation:
 - a. Money spent as quick as it came – as a bag with holes.
 - b. Compare the curse of Leviticus 26:20 & Deuteronomy 28:38-40.
- C. The priority for God's welfare (:8-11)

Principle #3 > I Samuel 2:30, "...them that honor Me, I will honor..."

 1. God's **pleasure** (:8):
 - a. The exhortation - "*go up*" - to get materials for the Temple.
 - b. The expectation - God is pleased > cf. II Cor. 5:9 (our labor); Eph. 5:10 (our lifestyle); & Heb. 13:15-16 (our lips).
 2. God's **praise** (:8) - "*& I will be glorified.*"
 - a. God's design - John 15:8.
 - b. Man's desire - Philippians 1:20-21.

Summary: "The blessed results of obedience are here noted. In short, Haggai is saying, 'Give God the supreme place in your life.' God would then be honored in the worship of His people. A heart attitude of obedience would have shown worship & gratitude on their part, thus glorifying God" Feinberg).
 3. God's **prediction** (:10-11):
 - a. Why they were not prospering.
 - b. Why God was not blessing.

III. The **success of participation** (:12-15)

- A. The prophet of the Lord (:12-13a):

[God's man in God's place at God's time with God's message.]

 1. His sending by the Lord (:12).
 2. His speaking for the Lord (:13a) - "*the Lord's messenger.*"
- B. The promise from the Lord (:13b) - "*I am with you.*"
 1. Promise of His presence (cf. Hebrews 13:5 & Matthew 28:20).
 2. Promise of His power (authority - cf. Joshua 1:8-9).
- C. The prompting by the Lord (:14).
 1. The response of the leaders.

"When God has work to do, He will either find or make men fit to do it, & stir them up to it." (M. Henry). See Ezra 1:5.
 2. The response of the laymen.

"The honesty & faithfulness of both (leaders) were well known, so that the people spontaneously followed their example." (Calvin).

Conclusion: Haggai's message ultimately resulted in the renewed building & eventual completion of the Temple (see Ezra 6:15). But Haggai makes sure to point out that it was the Lord Who stirred up the spirit of the leaders & laymen. They had been convicted of their sin of procrastination, making excuses for not finishing God's house. They were then convinced of the secret of prioritization, seeking first God's work, wealth, & welfare. They are thus able to consider the success of participation because of the Lord's prophet, His promise, & His prompting. Is your heart stirred to serve the Lord? Have you been guilty of procrastination regarding the Lord's work? Have you failed to make God's work a priority? Will you get involved & participate in God's work, that you might experience the blessings He has for His people?

Don't continue to procrastinate! Do consider your need to prioritize! And do commit yourself to participate!