

Bible Study: Haggai

Author: Haggai

Audience: Post-exilic Judah

Date: 520 B.C.

Location: Jerusalem

Theme: Be strong and do God's work

Genre: prophecy/prose

Outline

The First Message: Get Back to Work (1:1-15)

The Second Message: Be Strong and Work (2:1-9)

The Third Message: Now I Will Bless You (2:10-19)

The Fourth Message: I Have Chosen Zerubbabel (2:20-23)

Chronology of the Postexilic Period*				
<u>Persian Kings</u>	<u>Reigned</u>	<u>Biblical Events</u>	<u>References</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Cyrus	559-530 B.C.	Edict of Cyrus for the return	Ezra 1:1-4	538 B.C.
		First return of exiles under Zerubbabel	Ezra 2	538
		The altar and temple foundation built	Ezra 3:1-4:5	536
Cambyses	530-522			
Smerdis	522			
Darius I	521-486	Haggai prophesied	Book of Haggai	520
		Zechariah prophesied	Book of Zechariah	520-518
		The temple completed	Ezra 5-6	515
Xerxes (Ahasuerus)	485-465	Accusation against Judah	Ezra 4:6	486
		Vashti deposed	Esther 1:19	482
		Esther became queen	Esther 2:17	478
Artaxerxes I (Artashasta)	464-424	Haman's plot foiled	Esther 3:7	474-473
		The rebuilding of Jerusalem stopped	Ezra 4:7-23	ca.464-458
		Second return of exiles under Ezra	Ezra 7-10	458
		Third return of exiles under Nehemiah	Book of Nehemiah	444
		Malachi prophesied	Book of Malachi	450-430 (?)
Nehemiah's second return	Nehemiah 13:6	ca. 430		

*Based on Bible Knowledge Commentary entries for Ezra & Esther

Observation

1:1 Haggai prophesied during the 2nd year of King Darius I of Persia (520 B.C.).

1:1 The 1st message: 1st day of the 6th month (Elul) is a new moon festival.

1:2 The people were no longer rebuilding God's temple (cf. Ezra 4:1-5).

1:4 But, they found time to build fine, paneled houses for themselves.

1:6 Their lives were filled with troubles because they were ignoring God.

1:8 God's command: Rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased and glorified.

1:9 God had cursed their lives because they had ignored His temple (cause-effect).

1:12 The people feared God and obeyed the message; exile had changed them.

1:13 God's promise: "I am with you" as you build My temple (cf. Matt 28:18-20)

1:14 God stirred up the spirit of the people; He motivated them (sovereignty).

1:15 They resumed work on the temple on the 24th day of the 6th month.

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2:1 The 2nd message: 21st day of the 7th month (Tishri) is the last day of Tabernacles.
2:3 Who can remember the former temple (destroyed 66 years earlier in 586 B.C.)?
2:4 God's command: Be strong and work because I am with you (1Cor 3:9-10, 9:16-17).
2:5 God's command: Do not fear because My Spirit is among you (Acts 18:9-10).
2:6 God's promise: I am going to shake the heavens and the earth (Heb 12:25-27).
2:7 God's promise: I will fill this house with glory, the wealth of all nations (fulfilled).
2:8 Yahweh declares, 'The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine' (Ps 24:1).
2:9 The glory of this house will exceed the former (i.e., Herod the Great, Jesus Christ).

2:10 The 3rd message: 24th day of the 9th month is winter (Ezra 10:9, Jer 36:22).
2:12 God asks: Does consecrated meat sanctify anything that it touches? No.
2:13 God asks: Does an unclean person defile anything that he touches? Yes.
2:14 God concludes: The people are defiled and everything they do is defiled.
2:17 Take notice; up to this day, I smote you and every work of your hands.
2:19 Their barns were empty, and their fields were barren (i.e., poor harvest).
2:19 God's promise: From this day forward, I will bless you (fulfilled).

2:20 The 4th message: 24th day of the 9th month (Chislev) again.
2:21 This message is specifically for Zerubbabel, not the people.
2:21 God's promise: I am going to shake the heavens and the earth (Luke 21:25-26).
2:22 God's promise: I will overthrow kingdoms, nations and armies (Millennial).
2:23 God's promise: On that day, I will make you like a signet ring, Zerubbabel.
Note: Zerubbabel had let the work lapse, but he repented and obtained success.

Interpretation

Who or what is "the desired of all nations" (2:7)?

The rendering, "the desire of all nations" (KJV), has been usually understood as a messianic prophecy referring to the coming of the One desired by all nations. The trend of recent translations and commentators has been away from this personal reference to the impersonal "desired things." However, the evidence is not all one-sided, and a case can be made for retaining a personal messianic reference. Perhaps Haggai deliberately selected a term that had exactly the ambiguity he wanted in order to include both an impersonal and personal reference.¹

How did the glory of this temple exceed Solomon's temple (2:9)?

According to Jewish tradition, the second temple lacked: the ark of the covenant, the Urim and Thummim, the holy fire, the Shekinah, and the Holy Spirit (Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 21b).²

The restoration temple (this present house), Haggai said, would have a glory greater than the Solomonic temple (the former house) because during Herodian times the presence of the Messiah would adorn it (cf. Matt. 12:6; John 2:13-22).³

¹ *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 1:1542.

² *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2001), 373.

³ *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1:1542.

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Why did God compare Zerubbabel to a signet ring (2:23)?

The significance of comparing Zerubbabel to a “signet ring” (a seal of royal authority or personal ownership) is clarified by the imagery in Jeremiah 22:24-25. God said that if Jehoiachin (Zerubbabel’s grandfather) were His signet ring, He would pull him off His hand and give him over to Nebuchadnezzar. Possibly, Haggai was saying that in Zerubbabel God was reversing the curse pronounced on Jehoiachin... An alternate interpretation sees Zerubbabel exercising delegated authority with David during the future millennial reign of Christ.⁴

Such a ring was a costly item and may have been worn on the finger or round the neck on a chain; either way, it was always attached closely to its owner, and would never be lost or abandoned. This speaks of Zerubbabel’s value to God. It seems that such rings were used to stamp the royal seal on a document; this suggests that God entrusted Zerubbabel with authority to carry out his will.⁵

Application

A sin to avoid: Israel failed to put God first (1:2).

An example to follow: Encouraging one another to do the work (1:8)

A verse to memorize: ‘The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine’ (2:8).

Lesson: The history of Israel is a type of the Christian church (1Cor 10:1-11).

They were building a physical temple; we are building a spiritual temple.

They were attacked by physical enemies; we are attacked by spiritual enemies.

They were cursed for ignoring God’s work; woe to us if we ignore God’s work.

⁴*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1:1544.

⁵ *New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), Hag 2:20.

Scriptures

Ezra 4:1 Now when the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the people of the exile were building a temple to the LORD God of Israel, 2 they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' households, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God; and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here." 3 But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' households of Israel said to them, "You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God; but we ourselves will together build to the LORD God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia has commanded us." 4 Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building, 5 and hired counselors against them to frustrate their counsel all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Matt 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

1Cor 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.

1Cor 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. 17 For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me.

Acts 18:9 Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; 10 "for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

Hebrews 12:25 See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. 26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN." 27 This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Ps 24:1 A Psalm of David. The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.

Ezra 10:9 So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month; and all the people sat in the open square of the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain.

Jer 36:22 Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month, with a fire burning on the hearth before him.

Luke 21:25 "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, 26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.