

Mini Study – Haggai (part 1 of 3)

Consider Your Ways

Life is full of competing priorities - but which one captures our heart? What is the thing that we love to spend our time, energy, and attention on? And what about the LORD – what place does to know and live for Him have in our life?

The prophet Haggai spoke to a people for whom their relationship with God and obedience to Him was no longer their top priority, displaced by their own wants and concerns. Join us as we explore further what the Lord had to say through His prophet to His people then, and to us now, and to consider our own ways in the light of the truth we discover.

OBSERVE

READ Haggai 1:1-4 (Scripture text at back of study) and:

- put a clock symbol beside every *date reference* or the word *time*.
- circle every reference to *house / houses*.

DISCUSS

V1 –When did Haggai declare his *first word* from the Lord? To whom?

SETTING THE CONTEXT

The prophet Haggai declared his *first word* from the Lord in the second year of Darius the king. This dates it to the year 520 B.C., eighteen years after the LORD had stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, now the ruling power, to allow His people in exile to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, the house of the Lord. A remnant of the people, whose spirits had been stirred up by God, did return and had laid the foundation of the temple, an event marked by great praise and thanksgiving to the Lord (Ezra 3:8-13). However, due to opposition without and misplaced priorities within the rebuilding of the temple had ceased for around 14-15 years, at which time the Lord sent His prophet to speak to His people.

V2-4 –What were God’s people *prioritising* over rebuilding the house of the Lord?

OBSERVE

READ Haggai 1:5-11 and:

- underline every reference to the phrase *consider your ways*.
- circle every reference to *home / house (including synonyms)*.

DISCUSS

V5-6 – What did their disobedience to the LORD result in?

FURTHER READING – for more on the reason for their plight see – **Deuteronomy 28:15-19**. See also the contrast in **Deuteronomy 28:1-6** with the blessings promised for obedience.

V7-8 – What does the Lord command them to do? Why?

V9-11 – Why were they experiencing the Lord's judgment instead of blessing?

OBSERVE

READ Haggai 1:12-15 and:

- underline the phrases *obeyed the voice of the LORD / feared the LORD*.
- circle the word *house*.

DISCUSS

V12 – How did Zerubbabel, Joshua, and all remnant of the people respond?

V13 – What encouragement did the Lord give them?

V14-15 – What caused leaders and people alike to fear and obey the LORD?

How did they obey the LORD?

REFLECT

So, how does the message of Haggai apply to us as believers today? Well, as those in Christ we now are the temple of the living God, living stones being built up as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, the people of God who have received His mercy and who are to proclaim, in word and deed, the excellences of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light, that those outside of Christ may come to know Him and become part of His house too (1 Peter 2:4-12).

And the upbuilding of God's house is both an individual and corporate endeavour. Each living stone to prioritise above everything else their relationship with the Lord – to grow in their knowledge of Him and living for His glory. And whilst as those in Christ we are no longer under God's judgement for our sin we will still experience the Father's discipline when we live in disobedience to His will. A gracious 'wake up' call for our good, that we may share His holiness (Galatians 3:10-14; Hebrews 12:3-11).

And just to add more metaphors to the mix. When it comes to growing spiritually as the body of Christ, we need one another. Those joined together in Christ who encourage one another to seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness, helping one another to see our 'blind spots', and to lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and to run with endurance the race set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Ephesians 4:11-16; Matthew 6:33; Hebrew 12:1-2).

So, let's be those who live in a manner worthy of our calling, a holy temple in the Lord being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit, as we look forward to the day when Christ will return, His rebuilding of us completed, and we become like the One who lived and died to save us (Ephesians 4:1,2:19-22; 1 John 3:1-3).

RESPOND

Here are some questions to help you further reflect and respond to the truth of God's Word you have discovered through this study:

- What priority does knowing the LORD through His Word have in your life?
- What priority does upbuilding the Lord's house, His Church, have in your life?
- What specific sin in your life has the Holy Spirit highlighted to you?
- Give thanks that with the LORD is abounding grace. Come to the LORD and confess your sin to Him and receive His forgiveness. Ask the LORD to cultivate in you, through the Spirit, a greater fear (reverent awe) of Him and desire to live for His glory.
- What changes do you need to make to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?

(1) Haggai 1:1-4

In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: ²“Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.” ³Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, ⁴“Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your panelled houses, while this house lies in ruins?

(2) Haggai 1:5-11

⁵Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁶You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

⁷“Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁸Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord. ⁹You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. ¹⁰Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. ¹¹And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labours.”

(3) Haggai 1:12-15

¹²Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD. ¹³Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, “I am with you, declares the LORD.” ¹⁴And 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 of hosts, their God, ¹⁵on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.