

## Haggai

### The Temple Rebuilt

#### Focal Verses: Haggai 1:1-14, 7-10, 12-15

##### Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will **EXPLORE** why God withheld His blessings from His people; **SENSE** times when our own ambitions are contrary to God's plans for us; and **DECIDE** we will do exactly as God commanded.

##### In Focus

Alex's favorite thing to do was play the video games his parents Marcus and Felicia bought him for his birthday. He planned to do nothing else but play video games during spring break. When it was time for family devotions, he was upset. It took him away from his games. He copped an attitude at prayer time too. On Sunday morning, Alex whined he didn't want to go to church.

"I want to stay at home," he mumbled from underneath his covers.

"And do what?" Marcus asked.

"Play video games," he said with a dreamy smile.

"No way, that is unacceptable," Felicia said.

Marcus and Felicia confiscated Alex's games for one week. At first, Alex was really upset. But during the week, he started to notice all he'd missed doing since he got the games.

As he made his bed, he heard his brother and sister laughing in the hallway. He hadn't played with them in a while. He hadn't been outside with his friends in a while, either. He even stopped talking with his mom and dad like he used to.

"Man, I've gotta get things right again," Alex said.

He began to spend more time with family and friends, so the week went by faster than Alex had expected. When his parents returned his video games, he didn't want to play them as much.

***"Today's lesson teaches us the importance of refocusing our priorities on God.***

**Keep In Mind**

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

**Lesson Text**

**Haggai 1:1-14, 7-10, 12-15**

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

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

**3** Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

**4** Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

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

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

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

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

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

"**13** Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD.

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

15 In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king of Kings.<sup>1</sup>

### **The Lesson** **The People, Places and Times**

**Haggai:** Haggai was an Old Testament prophet and author of the book of Haggai. The name Haggai is derived from the Hebrew word *hag*, meaning “*feast*” or “*festival*.” This term usually refers to the three pilgrimage feasts of the Jewish religious calendar (Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Weeks, and Feast of Tabernacles). The prophet may have been born during the celebration of one of these feasts. As God’s spokesman, Haggai encouraged the captives who returned to Jerusalem to complete the reconstruction of the temple.

**Remnant:** The part of a community or nation that remains after a dreadful judgment or devastating calamity, especially those who have escaped and remain to form the nucleus of a new community. The survival of a righteous remnant rests solely on God’s providential care for His chosen people and His faithfulness to keep His covenant promises.

**Zerubbabel:** Zerubbabel became the Persian governor of Judah under Darius and was placed in charge of the returning Jews and given the title “*Governor of Judah*.” After much delay, Zerubbabel succeeded in leading the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C. (see Ezra 3:8–10 and Haggai 1:14). This reconstruction lasted longer than the temples of Solomon and Herod the Great combined.

### **Background**

The Lord had provided wondrously for the Children of Israel, but they sinned against Him. In His mercy, He promised to deliver them from the hands of their captors. He also gave careful instruction through the prophets regarding how and when to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Once the captives were allowed to return to Jerusalem, they set up an altar and laid the Temple foundation. The work of rebuilding the Temple started shortly after the first exiles returned from Babylon in 538 B.C., but the building activity was soon abandoned because of discouragement and oppression as they faced multiple fronts of opposition. They became so frustrated that even when the opposition was lifted, they were slow in rebuilding the Temple. They settled comfortably into their own homes and were “content to neglect the Temple work. It is this breach of promise that is addressed in today’s lesson. Beginning in 520 B.C., Haggai and his fellow prophet Zechariah urged the people to resume the task. The Temple was completed four years later in about 516 B.C. (see Ezra 5:1; 6:15)”

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<sup>1</sup> Darius III was the last Achaemenid King of Kings was named king of Kings of that empire

## In Depth

**1. The Message of the Prophet (Haggai 1:1-4)** The book of Haggai had a message for the Hebrew people who returned from the exile imposed by Babylon in 586 B.C. Even though the Hebrew people had more than 70 years in captivity to learn about the priority of divine things, they returned to their old pattern of misplaced priorities, and a few years after returning from exile again, misunderstood their purpose. Haggai's prophecies declared God's displeasure with Judah's ingratitude."

God made it clear through King Cyrus the reason for the return was to rebuild the house of the Lord and to resume worship in it. But after the people received their freedom, they put other "priorities before those of God and made excuses for not doing God's task. The first excuse was there was no time. They basically said, "What is the rush? It can wait." They had been freed from physical bondage, but they were still bound by the tyranny of time. It is amazing how we suddenly acquire the gift of patience when it comes to doing the things God has commanded us!

The returning remnant could not say they did not know how to go about the work, because God had given them specific instructions on how to do it. They could not say they had no money, because God had provided the monies. They could not say they had no experts, for God had provided skilled workers. Despite all the providential preparation, they said, it was not time yet to rebuild.

Their own comfort had become their god. In short, they had become their own god. What they wanted took precedence over what God wanted. Look at the way God poses the question to them in verse 4: "Is it time for you . . . ?" This implies that it was not an issue of time but of their view of God's place in their lives. Such an attitudes calls for self-examination.

**2. A Prophetic Challenge (vv. 7-10)** This call to self-examination implies that if the Hebrew people weighed things carefully, they would notice their way was not working; they struggled to maintain the bare minimum. God, having been put on the back shelf, was withholding His blessings. These people were like so many of us; we want the gifts but not the Giver. We need to be reminded God is our source. We must keep in "mind that God is the reason we have what we possess. How soon we forget!

God revealed that there was an imbalance in their lives because of their procrastination and disobedience. In verses 7 and 8, He tells how they can get back on track. First, He tells them, "Consider your ways." Second, He tells them to prioritize. There was a way of escape from their hopelessness. God says to go and "build the house" (v. 8). Notice God does not change the command; He merely gives

them a second chance. Obedience to God realigns us with His will and puts us in the place where we are able to receive from the Lord.

They were in trouble, which they had brought upon themselves. They chose their own houses instead of God's house. The desolation of God's house led to the desolation of their houses. Everything that happened to them directly related to something they did or refused to do in relation to God. He provided everything they needed, yet there was not a house for Him. The law of recompense was in progress: they reaped what they sowed.

**3. Obedience and Transformation (vv. 12–15)** God is pleased when we hear His rebuke and repent. The people repented after Haggai revealed what God was saying to them. They did what God said to do; they considered their ways. Haggai then assured them of God's presence (v. 13). Once the people obeyed, God reassured them by saying, "I am with you." This reassurance caused the people to complete the work they started. Their spirits were stirred, and they were ready to work.

#### **Liberating Lesson**

"If we are honest with ourselves, we will discover that many (not all) of the calamities we face are a direct result of our disobedience to God's Word. God has told us the way to succeed, but we have chosen to go our own way. He says, "Left," and we say, "Right." He says, "Up," and we say, "Down." He says, "No," and we say, "Yes."

Consider a time when God revealed His desire that you build a life that honored Him, but you failed to obey. How did your disobedience manifest itself in other areas of your life? How have you learned to heed God's voice? What advice can you give others to do the same?"

#### **Application for Activation**

"Make a list of some circumstances in your life that are not going favorably. Search the Scriptures beginning with today's lesson, asking God to reveal where you should honor Him in your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the courage and determination to make God's priorities your priorities and to lift your anxiety as you focus more on being in His will. Keep a prayer journal during this time to record the changes and encouragement God gives you spiritually and physically as you see Him change you in the midst of the situation."

#### **Closing Prayer**

**Week of 17 March 24**

**Daily Bible Readings**



**Monday** – Proverbs 10-12

**Tuesday** – Proverbs 13-15

**Wednesday** – Proverbs 16-18

**Thursday** – Proverbs 19-21

**Friday** – Proverbs 22-23

**Saturday** – Proverbs 24-26

**Sunday** – Proverbs 27-29