

Consider Your Ways!

(October 4, 2022)

Often, Christians facing difficulties are quick to ask others to pray for them. That's certainly always a good way to handle all adversity that enters our lives. The problem is that sometimes God sends difficulties, trials and adversity into our lives for another reason altogether that we may not grasp and that reason has to do with our not taking our relationship with God seriously enough. We tend to see problems and issues - even if man-created - as things that God is not involved in.

For instance, people today are talking about weird weather patterns and many attribute these either to alleged man-made "climate change" or deliberately manipulated-by-man heavy weather (through HARP or something else).

I honestly don't know enough about technology to manipulate weather to know if it's true or not. Regarding "climate change," many scientists have gone on record to say it simply doesn't exist. However, these individuals are routinely censored and/or cancelled altogether so that their voices are not heard. The world actually *needs* carbon dioxide.

But all this aside for a moment because even IF human beings can manipulate weather to create catastrophic events or IF humans are causing "climate change," the plain fact of the matter is that ultimately, God controls all these things, doesn't He? The short answer is YES. So, in essence, God controls what comes into our lives and that truth is repeated throughout Scripture. But let's take a look at one minor prophet by the name of Haggai. His two chapter book spells a few things out that were not only apropos during Israel's day then, but I believe are applicable for us today as well.

I'd like to simply look at the first eleven verses of **Haggai 1**, which could easily produce numerous sermons based on that chapter alone. I want to highlight the first eleven verses.

1 In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, 2 "Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." ' "

3 Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" 5 Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways! (Haggai 1:1-5 NKJV)

Okay, what you just read is the "set up" for what God is about to reveal to the Israelites. Haggai notes that God spoke to the prophet Haggai during the second year, the sixth month and the first day of that month of King Darius' reign. You'll recall that Darius was the king of the Medo-Persian Empire and who conquered the Babylonian Kingdom. Darius' kingdom was the second kingdom from **Daniel 2**, where the four final kingdoms of world history were first highlighted, leading up to the physical return of Jesus.

Haggai received the word from the Lord and was told to speak to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah and Joshua, the high priest over Israel at that time. God starts the conversation off with a statement and a question. God told Haggai that according to Israelites, it was not time to rebuild the Lord's House (His Temple). They were busy with their own concerns and lives. God could wait. The question God asked was simple: *"Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"* I'm sure you already see where this is going.

God's directive or command in **Haggai 1:5** is simple and direct: *"Consider your ways!"* In effect, God wanted Israel to see its own hypocrisy where God was concerned.

Haggai 1:6 is a statement meant to make Israel understand several things. First, God was in full control of all things, including the weather and the harvest.

*"You have sown much, and bring in little;
You eat, but do not have enough;
You drink, but you are not filled with drink;
You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;
And he who earns wages,
Earns wages to put into a bag with holes."*

Wow. WOW! Did you absorb what God said to Israel? They spent a good amount of time sowing seeds and planting gardens ostensibly for food, right? But notice that even though the people planted much seed, they were still hungry and could not satiate that hunger because they simply did not get enough of a harvest. By the same token, they did not have enough to drink, like the juice from grapes, etc. Potable water was likely not that plentiful either. God goes further and notes that even though they had clothes to wear, that clothing was not enough to keep them warm and safe from the elements.

Notice also that even though people worked and earned a wage, that wage was gone before they could turn around, spent on bills and other necessities. In other words, they lived hand to mouth.

In **Haggai 1:9**, God sums up His point.

*"You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I **blew it away.**"*

God points out to the Israelites what was actual and obvious to them. Why was He telling them these things? God was telling them *why* they were experiencing the problems they were experiencing, in **Haggai 1:9b-11**.

9...*"Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. 10 Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. 11 For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands."*

All the bad things that were happening to Israel were due solely to one fact. The Israelites had been content to allow God's House to lie in ruins! They didn't care, which means they did not care about God and their relationship with Him. What they cared about were their own felt needs. They were concerned about planting a good amount to ensure they would have food. They wanted a number of things but always came up short. They were concerned about having beautiful homes.

God's answer revealed where the Israelites' hearts were and apparently, they were far from the Lord. Haggai's message to Zerubbabel and Joshua was that the people needed to get in gear, go to the hills, find wood and repair and rebuild God's House of worship! It was that simple.

Let's be clear here though. It was not so much that God wanted His House rebuilt. He *did* but He also wanted people's hearts directed to Him. He wanted people who loved Him, cared about the things that God cared about and lived in a way that brought glory to Him. God wanted people to have Him at their top of their thoughts. He did not want to be an afterthought or a no thought.

For the Israelites, rebuilding God's House was the place to start because it represented all that God was to them to the surrounding nations. With the Temple rebuilt, the sacrificial system could be effectively restarted and observed. If Israel didn't take God seriously, why should people from other nations?

What is happening in the world right now? Hurricanes, droughts, flooding, volcanoes, extreme heat and more are creating havoc throughout the world. I believe those who focus on the problems are missing the larger picture. It doesn't matter if people are manipulating the weather or not. It doesn't matter if it's due to "climate change." In the end, it's all due to God allowing/using these situations to draw people to Him and that includes those within Christendom.

If we take the time to look carefully at the 21 judgments in **Revelation 6-18** during the Tribulation, it is clear that at least some of those judgments appear to be "man vs man" or man's wrath against man. But that has absolutely nothing to do with anything. They all come from and/or are allowed by God.

When Nebuchadnezzar attacked and conquered Jerusalem and took captive many Jews including Daniel and his friends, we might be tempted to say that it was "man's wrath against man." However, it is clear that God directed that as He directs so much in history. God was angry with Israel so He dealt with it by using a foreign nation to discipline Israel. It was God's idea and He allowed it and controlled it. There are numerous examples of God working behind the scenes to affect how things work out in this life/dimension.

Every judgment in the **book of Revelation** is directed and/or released by God. Every one. In some He uses angelic or demonic forces. In others, He uses human beings. In still others, He appears to use climate and weather. But lest we lose sight of the large picture, the whole purpose of every judgment God sends not only during the Tribulation but many times in past history and even now, is to bring fallen people to repentance.

In Haggai's day, God wanted Israel to repent and come back to Him. He wanted them to have a deep, abiding, active relationship with Him. Israel had spent her entire history coming to and going away from God though one day, they will come to Him and never leave Him again...ever.

I firmly believe that what is happening throughout the world today is due to God's judgment. If man can manipulate the weather, God is *allowing* that for His purposes. If climate change is real (I don't believe it is), God is using it for His purposes. Every purpose can ultimately find its way back to the overriding purpose of God putting pressure on humanity to repent.

The Church is not excused from this and this is clearly evident in the letters to the seven churches of **Revelation**. Several churches were rebuked and told to repent. The Laodicean Church was told they had reached the point of being worthless.

Christian, is your house in order? Are you focused on God, not the issues of this world? Sure, feel free to notice what is going on but do so through the lens of Scripture. God wants our hearts. He wants us to worship and adore Him, to give Him thanks for everything that comes our way. Are you doing this? If not, please repent of that and get right with God.

Yes, you may well be saved. If so, you have eternal life with God and if you were to die today, you'll be with Him for all eternity. BUT, are you walking WITH God now? Is God the most important Person in your life? Are you in step with Him? Do you see beyond the judgments (trials, problems, and terrible situations that are striking the earth), to understand what God is doing as things move quickly toward the final seven years when God will pour out His wrath with near abandon?

God is trying to get the world's attention. We know from **Revelation** that it won't matter for many people who will continue to willfully push God away rather than repent. This attitude is overtaking much of Christendom today as well as too many within Christendom have the same exact attitude and are too busy becoming friends with the world, which is enmity with God (**James 4:4**). In fact, as James points out, God considers our friendship with the world adultery.

God is sending messages to the world. Repent! Repent! This message is also for those within the Church who have grown away from God, who no longer seek his favor.

Then 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 presence of the Lord.**"

The above words from **Haggai 1:12** fortunately show us the way the people reacted. Notice they...

- Obeyed, *and*
- Feared the Lord

Obedience is absolutely key. Without it, we are wasting our time and God's because of a true lack of commitment on our part. A desire to obey followed by actual obedience is prefaced upon a real *fear* of *offending* God. The people did not want God to be offended by their lack of commitment and disobedience so they *changed* their attitude and did what God wanted them to do.

The only thing that would have made this situation better would have been for the leaders of Israel to come up with the idea to rebuild the Temple without having to be told by God through Haggai.

Nonetheless, the people did what they were supposed to do *from the heart* and God blessed them because of it.

The same holds true for us today. Too many Christians are walking with one foot in the world. They are concerned over everything except their relationship with God. He is not that important to them as they do not daily read His Word, attend church or fellowship with other Christians. I get it that some people have a very difficult time finding a biblically-based church, but Christians need to seek out other Christians for fellowship and support, especially in these days. Keep looking.

Obey God and learn to grow the fear of offending Him. You will lose concern for the things that are happening, understanding that ultimately, they come from God.