

**Message #3****Haggai 1:7-15**

In I John 2:15-17 we read these words, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”

It is easy to get sidetracked in this world. It is easy to be lured away from a right and true focus on God and His word. That happened to Israel when they got back to the Promised Land from the Babylonian captivity and it can happen to us.

We come to faith in Jesus Christ and are set free, and then, as time goes on, we drift away from the key focus we should have. We can start off so on fire and so dedicated to the Lord and His word, but as time goes on, we can begin to lose that focus. That’s what happened to Israel.

It started off good. The nation was once again free to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. The people came back and were all revved up about rebuilding the Temple and worshipping God. They had an initial surge to obey the word of God and reestablish a good relationship with God. But threats and intimidations and enticements of the world caused them to back away. They were lured away from that focus.

Haggai was raised up as a prophet of God to call the people back to a right focus. His job was to communicate the truth to the people that they needed to consider their spirituality and change it. This was not something they needed to pray about; they needed to get going, reverse direction and get their focus back on God.

What we see here is that:

**GOD TELLS HIS PEOPLE IT IS TIME TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE SO THEY CAN EXPERIENCE HIS BLESSINGS AGAIN AND THEY IMMEDIATELY OBEY.**

Notice again in **verse 7**, Haggai challenges God’s people to carefully think about what they are doing and where they are headed. More accurately, Haggai challenges God’s people to think carefully about what they were not doing. They were not thinking right or doing right. It was time to take immediate action to reboot and get going for God.

When we live in this world, it is easy to fall into an attitude of apathy when it comes to God. It is easy to get focused on ourselves and our lives and tend to put God on the back of things rather than the front of things.

Now there are four parts to this text that are simple to see:

**PART #1** – God tells His people to get materials to rebuild the Temple. **1:8a**

Sometimes what God's people need to do is get to work and do what they can. When God calls people to do something, He gives them the means to do it. God's callings are in fact God's enablements and God wanted this Temple rebuilt now. Doing God's work does require work.

There are basically three commands God gives to His people here:

- 1) Go up to the mountains.
- 2) Bring down and bring back the wood.
- 3) Rebuild the Temple.

Their responsibility was to get the materials and rebuild the Temple. That was their assignment.

The stone for the foundation was available from the quarry mine areas that are still visible and visit-able to this day. Stone was not the problem, but wood was the problem.

To get the wood necessary for building the Temple, they needed to go to the mountain areas where the trees grew and the wood was plentiful.

Wood was needed for the beams of the Temple; for the roof and for inside paneling. When Solomon originally built the temple, he used cedar and cypress wood from Lebanon (I Kings 5:6-10). The best wood cutters at the time were the Sidonians so Solomon hired them to cut the wood.

About 16 years before Haggai, the people, who returned to Jerusalem because of the decree of Cyrus, purchased a great amount of cedar wood from Lebanon to be brought to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 3:7). We read: "Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters and food, drink and oil to the Sidonians and to the Tyrians to bring cedar wood from Lebanon to the sea at Joppa, according to the permission they had from Cyrus the King" (Ezra 3:7).

So when God tells His people here to go up to the mountains and get wood, one must wonder what happened to the wood they had already purchased. **We may assume that either they did not buy enough wood to complete the project, which is unlikely since the project would have been carefully calculated or they had taken the wood and used it to rebuild their own homes.**

In other words, the wood that was supposed to be used to rebuild the Temple was wood they were using to work on their own homes. So God says go up to the mountain and bring down the wood and rebuild the temple. God is straight and to the point. There was no need to pray about this, just time to go get it done.

It is not pleasing in the sight of God to spend on self that which belongs to the Lord. Whether it be wood, money, time, talents, gifts or skills, to just use those things on self and not the Lord is wrong and will not bring God's blessings.

**PART #2** – God gives His people reasons to rebuild the Temple. **1:8b-11**

God gives a series of three reasons why they should do this:

**Reason #1** - This will please Me. **1:8b**

One of the prayers we often challenge people to pray, and I, myself often pray, in my private devotions is “God, I want to be pleasing to thee.” Well there is a part we play in achieving that.

Pleasing God takes on different dimensions in different situations. In this context what this meant is that the people of God start putting God as a priority and go up to the mountains and bring down the wood and rebuild the Temple. That would please God.

God’s people, who want God’s blessings, need to carefully consider what it is that pleases God. This is a key to His blessings. Here are nine Biblical things that specifically say pleases God:

- 1) Faith in God pleases God. Heb. 11:6
- 2) Speaking the truth of God’s word pleases God. I Thess. 2:4
- 3) Not yielding to the flesh pleases God. Romans 8:8
- 4) Obeying the word of God pleases God. I Thess. 4:1; I John 3:22
- 5) Children who obey their parents please God. Col. 3:20
- 6) Living life with a focus on God’s future judgment pleases God. II Cor. 5:9
- 7) Serving God pleases God. Gal. 1:10
- 8) Living life in a way worthy of God pleases God. II Cor. 5:9
- 9) Praying for political leaders and those in authority pleases God. I Tim. 2:1-3

These things specifically please God. In this case God says go the mountain and bring down the wood and start rebuilding my Temple for that will please Me.

**Reason #2** - This will glorify Me. **1:8c**

God’s people, who want God’s blessings, must always think in terms of glorifying God. Obviously, when people obey God and please God, they bring glory to God. But in this case, by rebuilding the Temple it would bring glory to God. The reality of it is God would display His glory at the place that would glorify Him. If anyone will purpose to please God and glorify God, he will experience some amazing things.

**Reason #3** - This will put an end to your lack of prosperity existence. **1:9-11**

God describes things He permitted to happen because these people would not put Him first and do what was right:

**Negative Action #1** - They looked for much, but they had little. **1:9a**

God says you have never been able to receive what you expected. You expected to have more, but you always come up short because I am causing it.

**Negative Action #2** - What they are able to bring home blows away. **1:9b**

God says I blow away your prosperity and keep you from thriving.

**Negative Action #3** - You care more about your house than God's house. **1:9c**

God says you have been so consumed with your house, you have forgotten about My house. You have been so consumed with your lives and your world that you have forgotten about Mine.

**Negative Action #4** - I have withheld moisture. **1:10a**

In the dry season, dew was important for growth of crops. God said I withheld the dew.

**Negative Action #5** - I have withheld produce. **1:10b**

God says I am the One who has not permitted your produce to thrive.

**Negative Action #6** - I have caused a drought on many things. **1:11**

What God says here is that I am the One who is not permitting growth and prosperity.

1) Drought on the land.

2) Drought on the mountains.

3) Drought on the grain.

4) Drought on new wine.

5) Drought on the oil.

6) Drought on ground crops.

7) Drought on men.

8) Drought on cattle.

9) Drought on labor.

Drought affects people and animals.

**PART #3** – The leaders and people listen to Haggai and obey God. **1:12**

Frankly, this is one of the most amazing verses in the entire Bible. Rarely do leaders and people immediately respond like this. Talk about a revival or a reformation; this was instantaneous. Immediate change of heart and mind and obedience is rare.

Zerubbabel, who was the governor, and Joshua, who was the high priest, and all the people listened to the word of God and they “obeyed.”

These people actually listened to the message of Haggai and obeyed it. Prophets were not often treated like this. This is a very rare moment. Most of the time the leaders hated the prophets because they loved the power and loved their own sin.

Prophets were ridiculed, mocked, jailed, punished and even killed. It is so rare to find this kind of response to the word of God.

- 1) The people listened to the word of God spoken by a man of God.
- 2) The people obeyed the word of God.
- 3) The people revered God.

We get a good glimpse here of what real reverence for God is like. Real reverence and fear of God takes God’s word seriously and obeys it.

**PART #4** – Haggai tells the people God is with them. **1:13-15**

Haggai was a messenger of God, whose job it was to communicate the word of God. Two times in this book Haggai communicates that God is with them (**1:13**; 2:5). There was no need for fear or apathy. Their decision to take God’s word seriously and obey it got the immediate approval of God. God wanted His people to know that I will be with you every step of the way.

Whenever anyone decides to obey the word of God, one may know God is with them.

What God did was He stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest and all the people so that they took an interest in the rebuilding the house of the Lord.

The construction began just 23 days after Haggai proclaimed his first message (**Haggai 1:1**). He preached his first message on the first day of month 6 (**Hag. 1:1**) and construction began on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of month 6.

**Applications:**

1. Shortchange God and you shortchange yourself.
2. God's work requires people working to do what they can.
3. Some jobs in God's work are not glamorous, but all are important.
4. Pleasing God means different things at different times.
5. Whenever one obeys God, God is with them.
6. One may start over again and be blessed by God.