

Message #4

Haggai 2:1-9

We need this book of Haggai right here and right now. We are living in a time when most people are saying about this country, it is not what it used to be. It isn't the same anymore. This country has lost its luster and loyalty. In fact, just recently there was a person who was talking about how things were in this country when he fought for it and how they are now and he was shedding tears. Most of the people don't know what to do or what to think. That is where Haggai becomes such a critical book.

You see, when Haggai was written, there were people who had seen the good times and the glory days of the nation; but those days were gone. The Temple wasn't even standing. The people could not worship like they used to. It was depressing.

In that specific context, God raised up Haggai and gave him a message to take to the people of God and it is a message we need today:

WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE SEEN A MAJOR DETERIORATION OF THEIR NATION, THEY NEED TO COURAGEOUSLY KEEP THEIR FOCUS ON GOD AND HIS WORD FOR THIS WILL BE THE KEY TO GOD BLESSING THEM.

Back when we were in school we were given a syllabus and that syllabus contained a specific project we were required to complete. No matter what we did, we could not expect to get a good grade if we did not complete that project.

God has given us an individual assignment. The syllabus is the written word of God. If we don't seek to understand it and apply it, He will not bless us. On the other hand, if we do, He will bless us regardless of what is happening around us.

We saw in the first verse of chapter one in this book of Haggai that the word of the LORD came to Haggai on the **first day of the sixth month**. When we come to the first verse of chapter two we see that the word of the LORD came to Haggai on the **twenty-first day of the seventh month**.

Now the seventh month was a significant month when it came to the Temple. The Temple of Solomon was first dedicated in the seventh month (I Kings 8:2; II Chron. 7:1-11). So this would be historic to get this rebuilding assignment in the seventh month. This did have a major historical connection to the Temple in Jerusalem.

So by observing the dates we may precisely conclude that this second message is given less than two full months after the first message. If we assume we are working with a 30 day calendar, we could say this message came approximately 51 days after the first message.

Now we learn from **verse 1** that the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet. God always has His man for His time to speak in behalf of Him. He has gifted men He raises up in His time to communicate His word and will. In this case, it was the prophet Haggai for Israel.

God's word came to Haggai, and God gave Haggai nine specific messages. These are very precise messages he was to proclaim:

Message #1 - Haggai was to speak directly to Zerubbabel. **2:2a**

Zerubbabel was the governor or the political leader of the nations. He was the son of Shealtiel that puts him in the Davidic line (Luke 3:27). He came from a very prestigious political family. He was the major political governor and leader and he is specifically targeted with this message from God. Haggai had a responsibility to preach directly to Zerubbabel. He needed to hear God's truth.

There is an interesting story in history about the preacher Peter Cartwright (1785-1872). Peter Cartwright was a circuit riding revivalist in Kentucky, in the south in the 1800's. He was not well trained in the word, but he did love the Lord. He was preaching in a church one Sunday and was told that President Andrew Jackson would be in attendance. Some of the leaders of the church told Peter Cartwright to tone it down and choose his words carefully and not say anything controversial or offensive. As the story goes, Cartwright stood to speak and said this: "I understand Andrew Jackson is here. Somebody asked me to guard my remarks. Well, Andrew Jackson will go to hell if he doesn't repent." Well the people were shocked. After the service, President Andrew Jackson shook the hand of Peter Cartwright and said, "Sir, if I had a regiment of men like you, I would whip the world."

It doesn't matter how big or impressive the political leader, he needs to hear the word of God.

Message #2 - Haggai was to speak directly to Joshua. **2:2b**

Joshua was the high priest and spiritual leader of the nation. He was a major spiritual leader and he is specifically targeted with this message from God.

Sometimes religious leaders can begin to think they have outgrown the need to carefully study and understand more of the Scriptures. But no matter who the religious leader, he too needs the word of God.

Billy Graham once said one of his great regrets was that he did not study more. He said if I had it to do over again, I would preach less and study more.

It doesn't matter who the minister, he needs to carefully study and carefully understand the word of God and apply it.

Haggai was to take God's word to Zerubbabel and to Joshua. You cannot just figure out God's word on your own. You need someone to teach you. Haggai was God's prophet and his job was to teach them.

It is the political and religious leadership that is highly accountable to see to it that the people are properly led in their relationship and service of God. Political and religious leaders will be held highly accountable for this.

Message #3 - Haggai was to speak directly to the people. **2:2c**

Not only do political leaders need God's word, not only do religious leaders need God's word, but so do the people.

God's people were the people back in Jerusalem and they needed the word of God. These were the people in general who made up the nation. Men, women and children also needed to hear the word of God. **They need to hear that if they will purpose to take God's word seriously and interpret it and apply it literally, they will be blessed by God.**

All of them, regardless of status in life, needed to hear the same message. God's word is needed by everyone. No matter what ones status in life, all need the word of God.

From President to Vice President to Senators and Congressman to Governors to Mayors, they need the word of God. The religious leaders need the word of God. All people need the word of God. It doesn't matter who they are or where they are from. They may be rich or poor. They may live in a mansion or live on the street; they may be red, yellow, black, brown or white. All need the word of God.

Message #4 - Haggai was to ask them three questions: **2:3**

These questions are coming from God and they are, as Richard Taylor cited, in his commentary, "a tactfully brilliant maneuver" (*Haggai, Malachi*, p. 149).

These questions challenge people to make non-debatable observations. They are forced to admit the truth. Those observations lead to logical and unavoidable conclusions:

(Question #1) - Who is left among you who actually saw the former Temple?

Over four hundred years before this, Solomon had dedicated a magnificent Temple in the seventh month of the year (II Chron. 7:8-10; I Kings 8:2). Haggai says let's go back in your minds to before 586 BC. How many here saw the temple? Who among you were there and saw it?

The year now is 520 BC, so Haggai says go back in your minds 66 years and tell us who saw that majestic Temple.

The point of this question is to stir the memories of people to recall and visualize what that Temple once looked like. Babylon started deporting people in 605 BC and the Temple was destroyed in 586 BC. During this 19 year period, when people were being deported, they certainly would have been old enough to have seen it as a young person and their age now would be 70-80 years old.

In fact, we know when Ezra wrote some 15 years before Haggai, there were several who had seen the first Temple and actually wept (Ezra 3:10-13). Many of us who are older have seen the deterioration of the nation and the church. We have seen a movement away from God and His word. People don't even think in sane ways anymore.

Now the fact that the people were still alive who had seen the first Temple means they had survived the Babylonian captivity. Just that thought should have prompted them to want to worship God. We who are here to this point have survived all of the chaos by the grace of God and that point should prompt us to want to focus on God and His word.

There must have been a few who had actually seen that Temple. Perhaps there was a show of hands. It is questioned whether or not Haggai saw it based on the fact that he said "who among you," not "who among us." But there must have been some there who did see it or the question makes no sense. Many believe Haggai himself had seen it and was in a position to give a before and after perspective.

(Question #2) - How does the Temple look now?

There was no one who could say, boy the Temple really looks good now. As we get older some of the memories dim, but you certainly could remember this one. This second question is designed to get an eyewitness answer from eyewitnesses who actually saw it.

(Question #3) - Doesn't it seem to you that there is no comparison?

There was no comparison between the two. They were not looking at a glorious Temple, but rubble. Haggai knew it and the people saw it. Haggai's point is that compared to what you once saw, you are looking at nothing. **Comparisons can be discouraging and depressing, but they also can be convicting.**

To ask someone to compare a time when things were great with a time when things aren't great can be a great way to get someone back on track to days of greatness. These questions are great questions to ask a fallen brother or sister who has come to ruins.

Notice how verse 4 begins "but now." The message from God is taking a new direction. God is now changing directions from what has happened in the past to what needs to happen in present. **A critical key to getting out of the depressing situation is to refocus on God and His word and will.**

There is a crisis and the political leaders and the religious leaders and the people need to specifically know what it is.

Message #5 - Take Courage leaders and people. **2:4a**

We are living in a time when we hear almost every day, “The America we know is gone.” Okay, now that we have said that, what do we do about that? Take courage in the LORD and in the word of God.

The Hebrew word “courage” (hazaq) is one that is repeated three times and is a critical key to this context. Certainly all three mentioned members of Israel needed to hear this admonition and so do we. The word refers to being strong and courageous and firmly established and undaunted in something (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 269-270). Our courage is found in knowing we are obeying God and His word.

(Person #1) - Zerubbabel the political leader needed to take courage.

Zerubbabel was the political leader who was responsible to lead the people and he was also accountable to the Persian power who permitted him and the people to return. The Persian power had been good to Israel and Zerubbabel held the unique political position of being a leader at that time.

(Person #2) - Joshua the religious leader needed to take courage.

Joshua had a big job to oversee Temple matters. His responsibility not only oversaw the rebuilding of the Temple, but also the reestablishing of Temple worship. That is a big job. If the key priest got discouraged, it could and would affect the entire group.

(Persons #3) - The entire congregation of the people needed to take courage.

Notice that those addressed are “all the people of the land.” This refers to the Jewish people who were back in the land. They needed courage to continue to work and rebuild the Temple and to begin their public worship.

Message #6 - Take courage and work. **2:4b**

Having courage means getting to work. Having courage means being courageous enough to get something done and not letting intimidating things keep you from getting something done.

It takes courage to stay focused on God’s word and obeying it, when most around you don’t care. God says you need to keep obeying My word.

Message #7 - Take courage because I am God and I am with you. **2:4c**

God says the reason you may have courage is “I AM” with you. God is the sovereign “I AM” covenant God of Israel and He is with them.

This is so important to see. **The thing that can give God’s people courage and strength is knowledge of the fact that God is with them.** The courage is not found in them, it is not found in the political or religious leaders. The courage is found in the knowledge that God is with His people.

He is not only the “I AM,” but He is also the “LORD of hosts.”

He is the LORD of hosts, which means He sovereignly controls everything in the seen and unseen world. He sovereignly controls everything and everyone. God wants His people to know that I am with you and He strengthens this by saying I am with you by declaration. I declare this.

Message #8 - Don’t fear because I will fulfill the Promise I made when you came out of Egypt.
2:5

Haggai is a prophet and that means he presents prophecy. God says you need to realize that My Spirit has been with you as a nation when you came out of Egypt and it is still with you. My presence and My protection has been with My people ever since the Exodus.

This is important for us to know. We have had God’s Spirit in us since the moment we believed on Jesus Christ. God’s presence and God’s protection has been with us.

Now the covenant Promise God made to Israel is that she would have Promised Land and would be ruled over by a righteous King and she would be a nation who would have a Kingdom that would be honored by every nation in the world.

At this point this must have seemed like a pipe dream to Israel. God says I have not forgotten about that.

The promise given to us as the church is that we will be Raptured. We need to stay focused on God and His word until that happens.

Message #9 - God will eventually shake the world and establish Israel in the land and they will worship in His temple. **2:6-9**

This is eschatological prophecy. God wants His people to know how critical this Temple is to His future program. There are predictions God makes here that are yet to be fulfilled. It is important to observe that these prophetic predictions are made in the context of having the Temple in existence. We believe this will be a critical part of the Great Tribulation that will lead to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. That Temple will be rebuilt. This Temple is critical to the future program of God.

(Prediction #1) - God will shake the heavens and earth and dry land in the Tribulation. **2:6**

This language of God shaking the heavens and the earth is literal. It displays the sovereign power of God. God literally did that for Israel at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:16, 18; Ps. 68:8; 77:16-18). God will do that again. It will happen in the Tribulation.

(Prediction #2) - God will shake all nations of the world in the Tribulation. **2:7a**

Notice all nations of the world will experience the judgment of God.

(Prediction #3) - All nations will bring their wealth to Israel. **2:7b**

This prediction was clearly made by Isaiah in Isaiah 60:1-7. God promises that one day nations of the world will bring their wealth to Israel and give it to her.

(Prediction #4) - God's Temple will once again be filled with God's glory. **2:7c**

This again will be a place that features the glory of God.

(Prediction #5) - God has all silver and all gold. **2:8**

God says you seek to obey Me and My word and I'll see to it that you experience prosperity like you have never seen before.

(Prediction #6) - In the end the latter glory will be greater than the former glory. **2:9a**

This is interesting in view of Revelation. The Temple will be rebuilt and what will make the third Temple greater than the First Temple is that Jesus Christ Himself will be in that Temple.

(Prediction #7) - Israel and the Temple will be a place of God's peace. **2:9b**

This is a promise from God. That Temple will be standing and it will be a place of the peace of God.