

CONSIDER YOUR WAYS

TEXT: HAGGAI 1:1-11

Introduction:

1. Haggai is the first of the post-captivity prophets, those who ministered after the return of Israel from the 70 years' Babylonian captivity. Haggai is mentioned in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14.
2. Haggai's ministry preceded the prophet Zechariah's by about two months.
3. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah give us the historical background to the prophecies of Haggai.
4. The time was 520 BC (Scofield Study Bible). The king of Persia was Darius Hystaspes. King Darius approved of the work being done on the temple.
5. The commission of Haggai from the Lord was to rouse the people to rebuild the temple destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC.
6. Haggai begins his prophecy with a word of rebuke (1:2-7).
7. Verse 6 could refer to many people today – "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes."
8. People work and work and claim they have no time for God. And yet despite all their work and all their money and all their possessions – they are never satisfied (vs. 6).
9. Twice in Haggai 1, we read, "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways" (1:5, 7). Let us consider...

I. PEOPLE PUT THEMSELVES BEFORE GOD

1. Our Lord said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
2. But people like to put themselves first. In Haggai's day they were putting themselves first. And so the temple was not a priority for them.
3. They said it was not the right time to rebuild the temple (1:2).
4. There are many people like that today.
 - This is not the right time to get saved.
 - This is not the right time to get baptized.
 - This is not the right time to join the church.
 - This is not the right time to tithe.
 - This is not the right time to start contributing to missions.
 - This is not the right time to win souls.
 - This is not the right time to start attending Sunday School.
 - This is not the right time to start supporting the prayer meeting.

- And here is one that really matches up with the situation in Haggai's day – this is not the right time to finish renovating the building (1:2).
5. Let me ask you a simple question. *When* will be the “right time”?
 6. People need to stop putting off what God wants them to do. Soon our time on earth will be over. Do you really think God will be pleased with our foolish excuses?
 7. The people in Haggai's day had their foolish excuses, and the prophet Haggai identified their excuse for not rebuilding the temple (1:2). They put themselves before God.
 8. They were indifferent, and selfish, and backslidden.
 9. The people were not saying they did not want to build the Lord's house. The people were just saying that it was not the right time to rebuild the Lord's house (1:2).
 10. It was a poor excuse. The real problem was that they were cold, indifferent, self-centered, and worldly – just like many people today.
 11. Procrastination has been called the thief of time. But for Christians, procrastination not only robs them of time, it robs them of the blessings of God.
 12. Last Sunday morning a typhoon hit the Philippines. I thought to myself –if we were in NY, our attendance would be low because people had their excuse – bad weather.
 13. But things are much different over there – the church was packed and there were many visitors, and some of those visitors got saved. They did not use the typhoon as an excuse to skip church, and they are enjoying the reviving presence of God.
 14. And though they are poor (by American standards) they give generously to the Lord's work. Meanwhile, here in affluent America, most Christians do not even tithe or give to missions.
 15. The prophet Malachi said, “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Mal. 3:8-10).
 16. When we rob God we miss out on the blessings of God!
 17. The ushers tell me that some people take a one-dollar bill and roll it up and put it the offering basket. Do you really think we can pay off our bond debt with \$1 a week?

18. The people were saying that it was not the right time to rebuild the Lord's house (1:2). I have heard people say, they will start tithing and giving to missions – but not now. What foolishness!
19. Oftentimes Christians try and hide their indifference behind excuses and evasions (1:2). Moody said, "If you drive a man from behind one excuse, he takes immediate refuge behind another."
20. I have seen that over and over. A young lady in our church used to always skip Sunday School. I asked her why and she told me she had to work late every Saturday night. I thought she was just making excuses, so the next Saturday night I went by her house and she was home watching television.
21. She had other excuses for skipping church – too tired, too busy, too this, too that. Now she is totally backslidden and hasn't attended any church services in years.
22. Some parents use sick children as an excuse. Their little darling sneezes and they stay home from church. I heard a preacher say that he had seen parents use that excuse often until their children really did get sick. Then the parents stopped playing around.
23. Many parents skip prayer meeting, and their excuse is the children have homework. But these same families skip prayer meeting in the summer time when school is out for vacation.
24. Children should never miss prayer meeting (or other meetings – missions conference, revival meetings, etc.) because of homework.
25. The people in Haggai's day had become so worldly and so backslidden that God addresses them as "this people" (1:2), rather than "my people" (cf. Hosea 1:8, 9).
26. Note that they were not saying the building should not be done; only that it was not the right time to do it. This might not seem so bad, but keep in mind they had returned from Babylon almost 15 years before and the work had already been delayed for 15 years (cf. Ezra 1:1-3).
27. I think there are some people around here who would not mind waiting 15 years to finish our work! Everything our church needs can be accomplished with the people that are here right now, but we will have to stop making excuses.
28. God has given us the wherewithal to get the job done if we would only put God first, and stop making excuses.

II. THE PEOPLE WERE TOO FULL OF THEMSELVES

1. Haggai asked the people whether it was right for them to dwell in their "ciled (nicely paneled) houses" while the Lord's house lay waste (1:3, 4).
2. This simple question exposed their selfishness, ingratitude, indifference, apathy, complacency, and worldliness.

3. In contrast to the selfish people of Haggai's day, King David had the right attitude (II Sam. 7:1-3).
4. I know Christians who own several houses but they give very little to the Lord's work. Someday they will have to give an account to God for their selfishness.
5. J. Vernon McGee talks about preaching in a church that had no carpet and was in bad shape. Then after the service he slept at a deacon's house that was a beautiful mansion. Another time a church member took him out to an expensive restaurant, and the man gave a very generous tip to the waitress. Then after dinner they went to hear a certain preacher. When they passed the offering plate around Dr. McGee was shocked to see the man only put \$1 in the plate. "Consider your ways" (1:4, 5).
6. Second Timothy 3:2 says, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves."
7. Second Timothy 3:4 says, men shall be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."
8. People are too full of themselves. And when they are full of themselves there is no room for God.

III. GOD WANTS US TO CONSIDER OUR WAYS (1:5, 7).

1. Haggai said, "Consider your ways" (1:5; cf. 1:7; 2:18). It is a command to self-judgment. First Corinthians 11:31 says, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."
2. "Consider your ways" (1:5, 7). HA Ironside said that in the Hebrew this means literally, "Set your heart on your ways." In other words, "Set your heart on where you are going and what you are doing."
3. The Israelites were to judge the nature of their deeds (including their excuses) by the results which followed them. They sowed bountifully but harvested little (1:5-7).
4. They ate but were never satisfied. God had already warned them this would happen (cf. Lev. 26:23-26).
5. They drank but did not have enough; they clothed themselves but were not warm; they earned wages but it was quickly gone (1:6).
6. God disappointed them in all their expectations but they did not seem to realize they were being chastened by the Lord (1:7-9).
7. Our churches are filled with people that are under the chastening hand of God. Some have even stopped attending church all together. How strange indeed that they fail to see God wants them to consider their ways.
8. Consider this: why did God give the Jews the privilege of leaving Babylon to return to Jerusalem? The answer: in order to build the house of God (cf. Ezra 1:1-3).

9. Allow me to make an application: why did God save you and me? Answer: to work for Him (cf. Eph. 2:8-10).
10. Titus 2:14 says Christ “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”
11. Be honest before God this morning. Are you “zealous of good works”?

CONCLUSION:

1. Queen Victoria once asked a certain nobleman to go on an important trip for her. He replied that he could not leave England because he was too busy. She told him, “You take care of my business and I will take care of your business.”
2. We see from the book of Haggai that God is trying to tell us, “You take care of my business and I will take care of your business.”
3. God wants to bless us but some people need to get their priorities right.
4. They must “consider their ways” (Haggai 1:5, 7).

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