

The Minor Prophets

HAGGAI

- I. Central Message: Judah needs to arise from their complacency and get back to the Lord's work, specifically, rebuilding the temple
- II. Introduction
 - A. About the prophet
 1. name means, "my feast" or "the festal one" (some suggest this name given him by parents exiled in Babylon who optimistically anticipated the return of God's people to their homeland and the joyous celebrations which would occur when that day finally came)
 2. lived during the time of the captivity of Judah and prophesied in the early days of the return of the Jews
 3. contemporary of Zechariah
 4. Ezra 6:14 - through his efforts and those of Zechariah, the Jews in Jerusalem prospered
 - B. About the book
 1. no denunciations of immoral conduct
 2. the emphasis is on getting back to the Lord's work
 3. written around 516 BC
 4. four sections, each beginning with "the word of the Lord came"
 - a. 1:1-15 (central message: "Get your priorities straight")
 - b. 2:1-9 (central message: "Don't be discouraged")
 - c. 2:10-19 (central message: "Blessings for inward change")
 - d. 2:20-23 (central message: "God uses the faithful")
 - C. Important background information
 1. it has been suggested that the book of Ezra should be read in conjunction with Haggai
 2. 70 year captivity over and return to Jerusalem has begun
 - a. Babylon has been overthrown and at the time of Judah's release they were under the rule of Cyrus, the king of Persia
 - b. Ezra 1:2ff - Cyrus decreed that any who wished to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple could do so with his approval
 - c. II Chronicles 36:18,19 - the temple which Solomon had built had been ransacked and set afire in the Babylonian raid
 - d. the temple needed rebuilding and thousands of Jews returned to Jerusalem to answer this call
 3. Ezra 3:11 - "the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid"
 - a. Ezra 3:12 - some shouted for joy but many who had seen Solomon's temple in its glory wept
 - b. Ezra 3:13 - the weeping was as loud as the joyful shouting and the noise could be heard afar off
 - c. Ezra 4:1,2 - some Samaritans approached Zerubbabel, the leader of the building party, and asked to help
 - i. they had an interest in serving Jehovah, but as commentators have pointed out, their interest was not in serving the one God, but in serving Him as just one god among their many gods

- ii. to Zerubbabel's credit, he rejected the help of their help
- d. these Samaritans sought to get even so they penned a letter to the Persian ruler and warned him about these Jews, suggesting that they had a history of rebellion and would rebel against the king if they got their city rebuilt
 - i. the king went back into the record books and found that the Jews had indeed been a rebellious people
 - ii. Ezra 4:19 - "it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein"
 - iii. with that past history in mind, the king commanded Zerubbabel and his co-workers to stop building until he could investigate the matter more fully
- e. the Jews stopped their work on the temple and for fifteen years it sat with no work being done on it
- f. this is where Haggai, and Zechariah two months later, come in to deliver their inspired messages.

III. First Section (Haggai 1:1-15)

A. Central message: "Get your priorities straight"

B. Verses 1-6

1. verse 2

- a. note God calling them "THIS people" rather than "MY people" as a sign of His displeasure with them
- b. the real problem was the indifference and laziness; this statement was only an excuse
 - i. they had presumed to do God's thinking for Him
 - ii. they decided that since they had faced such severe opposition, that God did not want them to build the temple yet
- c. in essence, their attitude was a convenient way for them to keep from having to work and to keep from having to stand up against the opposition

2. verse 4

- a. during the fifteen year period in which the temple was left alone, the Jews were not just sitting around but instead had built themselves fine houses
- b. they had plenty of time and commitment to take care of their physical needs, but they would not put forth the effort to do the will of God, namely, rebuilt the temple
- c. notice the contrast
 - i. a ceiled house was one ornately decorated, indicative of luxurious living
 - ii. but God's house was lying waste
 - iii. it clearly shows where they had placed their priorities

3. verses 5-6

- a. the charge of verse 5 is repeated two verses later and seeks to focus attention inward
 - i. "Think about what you are doing"
 - ii. the first step to repentance is personal examination and recognition of error

- iii. literally, their charge is "Set your heart upon your ways."
 - b. here's what they should have considered
 - i. they had been putting material things first
 - ii. but what had they gotten from this? very little according to verse 6
 - iii. the next verses encourage them to consider what will happen if they start putting God first (they will be blessed)
 - C. Verses 7-11
 - 1. verse 8
 - a. do God's will, in spite of any opposition, and God will be pleased
 - b. in doing this, they would be glorifying God instead of glorifying themselves as they had been doing
 - 2. verses 9-11
 - a. more about the suffering they had experienced because of putting their pleasure above doing God's work
 - b. the latter part of verse 9 indicates that not only were they building luxurious houses for themselves, but they were doing it with great zeal, hotly pursuing material comfort ("ye RUN every many unto his own house")
 - c. God makes it very clear in these verses that He was the cause of their lack, and that it was not some coincidence
 - D. Verse 12-15
 - 1. the preaching produced the desired effect of repentance
 - 2. notice how the preaching was directed first of all to the leaders and also the fact that it was the leaders who lead the way back to obedience
 - 3. God gently reassures them now, "I am with you"
 - a. this statement was meant to encourage them to not give up but to work diligently throughout their days
 - b. compare to Matthew 28:20 where Jesus tells us, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (this should also be an encouragement to us, sufficient to help us overcome indifference and fear and be busy in His work)
 - 4. Ezra 5 should be read in conjunction with this
 - a. notice especially Ezra 5:8 - "this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands"
 - b. once the people recommitted themselves to the work, they did it with all their might
 - c. what they had lacked was commitment
 - i. indifference destroys commitment which, in turn, destroys work
 - ii. but when one is committed to doing God's will, he is able to accomplish many great things
 - 5. there were just 23 days between the time that Haggai first brought his message and the repentance of the people
- IV. Second Section (Haggai 2:1 -9)
- A. Central message: "Don't be discouraged"
 - B. This message came about two months later
 - C. Verse 3
 - 1. this states the problem

- a. the older men who had seen the glorious state of the first temple are discouraged because this temple is not as great as Solomon's
 - b. they considered this temple to be nothing in comparison to the former temple
 - c. like discouragement usually does, it spread from the old to the young
2. to understand the discouragement of the older men, consider the glory of the temple of Solomon
- a. it was 90 feet long, 30 feet wide and 45 feet high, not counting the various porches and chambers attached to it
 - b. gold covered its walls and ceilings and floors
 - c. gorgeous tapestry and precious jewels were all around it
 - d. above all this, the ark of the covenant was present in the Most Holy Place
 - e. all this was destroyed or stolen away by the Babylonian armies
 - f. now Judah is back, but with less money and fewer valuables
 - g. and the older men begin to look at this temple as inferior to the former
- C. Verses 4-9
1. God's method of encouraging them
- a. verse 4 - He tells them to get to work
 - i. busyness is a wonderful aid to overcoming discouragement
 - ii. inactivity gives one too much time to dwell on his problems and leads to self-pity
 - b. verse 4 - He reminds them, "I am with you"
 - c. verses 5-9 - He tries to get them to look ahead (dwelling in the past breeds discouragement, especially when the past was so great and the future looks unsure or even dim)
2. verses 6-9 are explained in different ways
- a. the "shaking" most likely has reference to the establishment of the kingdom (the church) for this verse is quoted in Hebrews 12:26,27 and, in the context, has reference to the kingdom
 - b. verse 7
 - i. some have said that the bulk of this verse has reference to the coming of Christ
 - ii. others have said it has reference to the surrounding kingdoms giving gifts to Judah which could be used to decorate the temple (they did receive gifts at the hand of king Darius - Ezra 6:8-13 - and king Artaxerxes - Ezra 7:11-26)
 - c. verse 9
 - i. some consider this to mean that this temple would be greater because Jesus would walk through it and be in it
 - ii. others say this means that the builders should be patient because after the gifts are received from the nations, the temple will look more glorious than it did at that time
- V. Third Section (Haggai 2:10-19)
- A. Central message: "Blessings for inward change"
 - B. Delivered two months after the second
 - C. God explains to them in more detail why they were deprived of blessings

- D. Now they need again to take something into consideration (verses 15,18)
 - 1. as long as they continued in their indifference and disobedience, they had little and suffered much
 - 2. but now that they were turning to God, they would be blessed
 - 3. God is telling them to mark the day when their fortunes began to change; it was the day in which they began doing His will

VI. Fourth Section (Haggai 2:20-23)

- A. Central message: "God uses the faithful"
- B. This message came the same day as the third
- C. God's kingdom will come and will be greater than earthly kingdoms
- D. Zerubbabel, the faithful, will be honored
 - 1. the signet represented authority and was very precious to the Jews
 - 2. Zerubbabel was in the Messianic line (Matthew 1:12; Luke 3:27)