

Haggai 1-2 – “I am with you” Declares the Lord

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

I think you're going to like this study. We're going to be in the very small book of Haggai tonight. So, open your Bible to the book of Haggai. This is the third from the last book of the Old Testament. So we're rapidly finishing the Old Testament.

The last two books, Zechariah and Malachi, we're going to take a little bit longer to go through, because they are a little longer; and there's some really important stuff that we're going to be going over in those two books. But these last three books are really, they're all amazing, but Haggai is particularly good, even though it is so short. Anyway, let's get into this.

Let's begin with prayer. Let's ask the Lord to open our hearts to the Word. Father, every time we come to the Scriptures, we do so with a humble attitude. Lord, I think about some of the great saints of old who used to read the Scriptures on their knees. And Lord, I see in their lives a deep understanding that so many times goes beyond that of a person who takes a more casual approach to the Scriptures. And Lord, the last thing we want to do is be casual about our study of Your Word. And so, Lord, we want to begin tonight by inviting Your Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts. We ask You to give us eyes to see, ears to hear, and truly a heart to receive tonight from the Scriptures what You want to communicate to us. We pray for You to speak words of grace and insight, and we desire to hear from You. Lord, we desire to be equipped to go into the rest of this week with the Word of God in our hearts. So be with us, we pray, Father. We ask it in the authority of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Haggai is, as I said, a very small one. The prophetic ministry, when I think about the ministry of Haggai, was pretty short. It lasted about four months. And you know what's unique about the book of Haggai?

Haggai prophesied to the southern kingdom of Judah, and they obeyed. This is really odd. This is pretty unique. Most of the prophets were called by the Lord to bring a message to Israel at one time or another. And in large numbers, they would just ignore what the prophet had to say, but not Haggai.

He has a ministry that is very effective, and it's probably because of the time that they were living in. And I think I need to start here by talking a bit about the time period of these prophecies, because it's important for us going into this study to understand the backstory of when Haggai was delivering this message and what was going on in Israel at that time. And by the way, when we're done with this study, you're going to probably feel like you not only just went through Haggai, but also the Book of Ezra, because we're going to be dipping a lot into that book.

But let me go back and just say that during the years of the kings, as you well know, the nation of Israel repeatedly fell into gross idolatry and paganism and turned away from their relationship with God, their covenant agreement that they had made with the Lord through Moses. And in response to that, God sent prophets to the people to tell them to turn from their ways and to come back and return to the Lord. And of course, the Lord used many other means to try to get the attention of His people, like their crops failing, or weather situations, or whatever.

And eventually, after literally hundreds of years, when it became pretty clear that the people of Israel were not going to listen, when they were not going to respond to the prophetic warnings that were being given to them, the Lord allowed Israel to, I guess I should put it this way, the Lord allowed enemies of Israel to rise up against His chosen nation and to invade the land. And several did on several different occasions. And eventually God sent prophets to the people telling about a final invasion in the land because they simply would not listen. They would not respond.

You'll remember that the first invasion, that was a final-type invasion, came in the northern kingdom of Israel when the Assyrian Empire took the land by force and scattered the people, literally assimilated those people, into the other nations that Assyria had conquered at that time. And then about 115 years later we know that the southern kingdom of Israel, which of course is called Judah, then fell to the Babylonian Empire.

You'll remember that, back when we went through the prophecies of Jeremiah, he prophesied about the coming of the Babylonian Empire to do that very thing. And he lived long enough to actually live through the invasion. Jeremiah lived through the invasion. He was there in Jerusalem when the Babylonians broke through the walls and invaded the city and carried off the king and put his sons to death and all the other things that went along with it.

But there was something else that God told Jeremiah, and that was how long the people of Judah would be carried off into exile in the land of Babylon. And God told Jeremiah that that exile would last seventy years. Now, during that seventy years, the Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire.

So literally, while the Jews are captive in Babylon, the Babylons got conquered. The Babylonian army or kingdom, Empire, was taken over by the Medo-Persian Empire. Eventually, God raised up a king named Cyrus, who gave permission to any Jew living in the Persian kingdom to go back to Israel, anyone who wanted to, and to rebuild the temple that King Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed when his army invaded the land so many decades before. In fact, let me show you. The book of Chronicles actually ends with this. It says in the last section of Chronicles:

(slide)

2 Chronicles 36:22-23 (ESV)

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, (that's speaking to the Jews) may the Lord his God be with him. Let him go up.'"

So this is exactly what Jeremiah had prophesied, that after this particular period of time, God would release the people to go back to their homeland, and then they would go back to rebuild the temple. Well, as you can imagine, an excited group of Jews made themselves ready to return to their homeland, to rebuild the temple that had been destroyed.

But according to the book of Ezra, which is where we read about that entire rebuilding process, it took them a year, after they got back to the land, to even start the construction. Let me show you this on the screen from Ezra, chapter 3. It says in verse 8:

(slide)

Ezra 3:8 (ESV)

Now in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem. in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of

Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their kinsmen, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to supervise the work of the house of the LORD.

So it took them quite a while to actually get started with this construction. But it goes on a couple of verses later. Look at this now from verse 10. It says:

(slide)

Ezra 3:10 (ESV)

And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the directions of David king of Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

So this is just the foundation. They just put up the stones that would be the foundation for the temple of the Lord. And they're all just shouting and praising and stuff. And so they got the foundation laid there.

But then when you go on and study the book of Ezra, you find out that it wasn't any sooner than they had this foundation up, but they started to get opposition. Now we'll show you Ezra chapter 4, verses 1-5. It says:

(slide)

Ezra 4:1-5 (ESV)

Now when the adversaries (notice that) of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the LORD, the God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' houses and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us here."

Now, let me just say something here quickly. This is interesting. You notice that it says that when these "adversaries" came to speak to them about this matter of the building or the rebuilding of the temple, one of the claims they made is, "We also worship Yahweh just like you do, and we've been sacrificing to him ever since. We've been sacrificing to him for a long time; before you guys got back here, we were sacrificing." Well, there's no way that could be true, because

when the Jews got back to the land, they built an altar and then began to do sacrifices, but there was no altar.

There was no altar to begin to sacrifice there in Jerusalem prior to that time. So they're just, they're blowing smoke about this thing. Now, let's keep reading. Here in this passage, it says:

(slide)

Ezra 4:1-5 (ESV) continued

But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers' houses in Israel said to them, "You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us." Then (look, listen to this) the people of the land (and that's speaking again of those adversaries) discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build (and even went so far, it says, as) and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

And that bribing of counselors is bribing men of law to probably send letters to Persia and to say, "What are these people doing? They shouldn't be doing this, etc." So notice what it says. They're frustrating *their purpose, all the days of Cyrus, even until through to the reign of Darius.*

So here's what's happening, and this is the reason this is important, because this environment is where Haggai begins to prophesy. The environment is one of constant frustration, constant opposition, constant difficulty. Have you ever been doing something for the Lord, and you were being constantly frustrated? Constantly opposed?

Can I tell you a couple things about that? First of all, opposition and frustration don't mean that you're not doing what the Lord wants you to do. I hear from people all the time, and they're questioning what they believe the Lord had previously told them to do.

I ask them, "Why are you questioning?"

They'll say, "Well, because it's just so hard. It's not going well. Every day is a constant frustration. It's a constant difficulty. There's just problems cropping up all the time."

And I say to them, "What does that have to do with anything?"

Let me ask you a question. Have you ever read through the Book of Acts? Have you ever heard what the Apostle Paul went through? Do you think he had the attitude that serving the Lord and doing the will of the Lord should be an easy task? Aren't you glad he didn't have that attitude? He would have quit after the first city. He would have quit after the first voyage. I'm going home. This isn't worth it. Things aren't going well. Opposition is for those who are doing the work of the Lord.

And I'm talking about, when I talk about the work of the Lord, don't get all super-spiritual on me. That could be just raising your kids in a godly home, doing your best to be a good mom or a good dad, a good husband, a good wife, a good employee at work, whatever the Lord has called you to do or to be. If that is frustrating, that doesn't mean you're in the wrong place. That doesn't mean what you're doing isn't what the Lord wants you to do. It just means you are a believer living in a fallen world, and we need to expect some level of frustration.

But here's the problem. That kind of frustration often will lead to disappointment, and I call disappointment the Big "D." Because that eventually leads to depression. But disappointment is a place where the enemy wants to get you, because, if he can get you to the place of disappointment, he can get you into a position of paralysis.

When we are disappointed with life, when we're disappointed with God, we become paralyzed, and we just stop. We just stop, and we stop doing what we know we're supposed to be doing, because we're so discouraged, so disappointed that it flattens your tires, to use as a metaphoric sort of an idea.

It literally flattens your tires. That's what discouragement does. And you talk to somebody who's discouraged, and they can't say anything good. I mean, the sky could not possibly be blue enough. The world can't be round enough, the sun can't be warm enough. Nothing is good. Nothing is acceptable because they're discouraged, and, like I said, the enemy wants to get you there.

He wants you to be discouraged. This is what was going on with the people of Judah. They laid the foundation of the temple, but they were dealing with so much opposition and so much trouble that they became discouraged. They became paralyzed, and for sixteen years they did nothing. They just dropped it, and they said, "This just isn't the time."

In fact, we read one more passage from Ezra. Chapter 5 goes like this:

(slide)

Ezra 5:1-2 (ESV)

Now the prophets, Haggai and Zachariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. (And we're going to read what Haggai prophesied to them, and here's the spoiler, all right?) Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

So you already know what's going on, you know what the ministry of Haggai is, and you know that he was successful from the standpoint of getting them back on track. Getting them out of their paralysis, right? And this is where it begins. So let's read now in chapter 1, verse 1. Haggai, if you're there in your Bible, goes like this: *"¹In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, (note that) and to (Yeshua) Joshua (if you will) the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: (Joshua, Yeshua. It's the same name, and it says,)"²Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD."*

So you see what they were doing because there was so much discouragement that eventuated into paralysis in doing the will of the Lord. They comforted, or I should say, they justified their inactivity or their paralysis by saying, well, obviously this isn't the time. This isn't the time to do this. A pastor could say the same thing. He could start having a Bible study and nobody's showing up, or very few people are showing up, and he could say to his wife, "Well, honey, this just isn't the time, apparently, to start a Bible study or to start a new church because these people aren't coming."

Or, "we're having trouble or there's been opposition or people have been getting in our face or, we've offended people, or this just isn't the time to do this." And that's what the people did. They gave those kinds of justifications related to their discouragement. So I want you to see how the Lord is going to respond to their attitude.

In verse 3, it says: *"³Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet. ⁴Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? (Ooh, what a question.) ⁵Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁶You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your*

fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.’”

You ever feel like that when you get paid, and you feel like your money went into a bag with holes? And it usually happens right after you go to Costco. Sue and I, we call Costco “The Hundred Dollar Store” because you go in there to get a watermelon or something like that, and you come out spending a hundred dollars, every time. And it's like, where in the world did that money go? Anyway, so the Lord is telling them to take heed to their situation in life.

And He says, “Have you noticed? Have you looked around when you go to sow your fields? Have you noticed that your harvest has been really meager? And have you noticed when you go to eat, you just never really feel full? You never have that satisfied feeling. Even when you drink, you're thirsty and you drink, but you just never feel like you've quenched your thirst. And then you get money and it's like it's gone in an instant. Have you noticed that happening?” the Lord is saying.

So verse 7, “⁷Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. (That's an important statement right there.) ⁸Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD.” (And then He reminds him. He says,) “⁹You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. ¹⁰Therefore, the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. ¹¹And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.”

So here, this is fascinating. The Lord is telling the people of Judah, “I did this. I did this. All this lack that you're seeing in your provisions, all of this inability to grow the crops that you would otherwise expect to grow out of the ground and on, and on, and on. I did this. I did this to show you that you have taken a position of fear based on your discouragement. And you have allowed it to paralyze you from doing what I told you to do.

“I moved upon Cyrus, a pagan king, by the way, to release you people to come back to your land, just like I told you I would, and I gave him the heart to tell you to rebuild the temple. I brought you back here.”

In fact, do you understand that Cyrus said that we're going to pay for this thing out of the Royal Treasury? Yeah. The Medo-Persian Empire was going to pay

the bills for this whole rebuilding process. And yet with all that, they still allowed the discouragement to paralyze them. So the Lord is saying, “Now, get busy. Go up into the hills, cut down the timber. Get the wood. Let's get this thing going again.”

And I want you to notice too, where the Lord said in verse 8, *“That I may take pleasure in it.”* Did you catch that? That's a good section in your Bible to highlight or underline or circle, *“That I may take pleasure in it.”* And this is something that's very important that I think we need to see in the Word. And that is that there are so many times in our lives that we live our lives for our own personal pleasure, and they had allowed their discouragement to put them into a place where now it's just going to be about me.

Obviously, we've run into these roadblocks related to this job that we were supposed to do, rebuilding, and that's not going to, it's not the time. It's not the time to rebuild the temple. Well, what is it time to do? “Well, I guess we're just going to live for ourselves. I'll build my own house. If I can't build, I'll just take care of my own situation, my own circumstances.

“I'll get my situation settled and organized. And we'll just leave this other thing because obviously this isn't the time, right? God says, “No, no, no. This is the time. This is the time to do My good pleasure, rather than yours.” So look at verse 12. It says, *“¹²Then 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.”*

This is that unique thing that is in the prophetic scriptures, *“¹²and the words of Haggai the prophet as the LORD their God had sent him, (oh, this is good) and the people feared the LORD.”* See, for sixteen years they have feared their enemies. For sixteen years, they allowed their enemies to dictate their fear.

And now the Lord speaks and says, “No, this is the time. You've been putting it off, and I want you to get busy.” And it says, *“¹²The people feared the Lord.”* And they decided, and see, their fear of the Lord overtook their fear of the enemy. And do you know, that needs to happen. Every parent understands this principle. Sue and I raised four kids, you know that.

There's a situation that every parent understands. Your kids have to be more afraid of you than disobedience. They have to understand, and I'm not talking about a terror that causes them to become withdrawn and that sort of thing. I'm talking about when parents are training their children to be wise and not foolish, because the Bible tells us that foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child.

Anybody that's ever raised kids knows that. It's bound up in the heart of a child. You didn't have to put it there. You didn't. It isn't your fault. I just want you to know that they were born that way.

They were born with foolishness just tucked in there. It's pre-programmed. It's hard-wired. And the Bible says that you have to do something about that as parents. They have to learn that there's something that is worse than not living out the foolishness of their life. And that's dealing with a parent and the consequences that come from parental discipline.

And that is what the Jews are realizing here at this particular point. So it says, *“¹²The people feared the Lord. And I love that. It says in verse 13, “¹³Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD’s message,(I want you to hear this. Here's the message that God gave them) ‘I’m with you, declares the LORD.’”*

And you know what? That's all He needs to say. That's it. That's all. That's all I need to hear. When I'm going through a hard time, when I'm going through a difficult season, I need to hear just one thing from God: "I'm with you. I'm with you. I'm beside you. I'm not going to let go of you. I'll hold you by the hand. I'll see you through this time. I will walk with you. I will guide you. Trust Me. I'm here. I'm good. I'm good."

Verse 14 says, *“¹⁴And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah,(who we're going to find out more about in the next chapter. I want you to remember this guy) and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, ¹⁵on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.”* Haggai even tells us when they got busy and got back to work.

So now we come to chapter 2, and it says, *“¹In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet: (Now he's got some special messages. He says) ²Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people. (So this is for the leaders and for the rest of the people), and say, ’ ³Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?’”*

Now, here's the deal. It's been a long time that the people were in the land of Persia in the Babylonian Empire. They were there for a long time, but there were some people who were old enough to remember seeing the original temple that Solomon built.

And you have to remember, Solomon literally had no lack. I mean, the guy was filthy rich, and he had all these resources, and he built this temple that was amazing. It was beautiful. It shone with gold. Gold became commonplace in Israel during the time of Solomon. And so this place was just decked out when Solomon built it.

But notice what God is asking them. He says, "Are there any among you who are old enough to remember the temple that Solomon built?" And now when you look at this structure that's currently going up right now, which we, by the way, call Zerubbabel's temple. He says, "What do you see? How do you see it?"

Do you in fact see it as nothing, or, in fact, very little by comparison. And like I said, the fact of the matter is, by comparison, it was like nothing. It couldn't hold a candle. In fact, we're told that sixteen years earlier when, remember, they just did put up the foundation. Well, there were some people there at the time, old enough to remember when the temple of Solomon was built, and they saw it in its finished form, and they only saw the foundation, and they wept.

Let me show you this on the screen. It's from Ezra, chapter 3. It says:

(slide)

Ezra 3:12-13 (ESV)

But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, (that's the young people) so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.

So, you got old people who are crying loudly because this new foundation doesn't look anything like the original. And you've got the young people who are going, "Yippy, it's going up, we're rebuilding."

And it says, you can't even tell the cries from the shouts of joy. It's pretty interesting. What's happening is that God is asking them to make these

comparisons. Well, that's not really true. He's calling to their attention, the fact that they had been making these comparisons because, honestly, God doesn't usually even want us to make comparisons.

Comparisons very rarely do us any good. Have you ever noticed that in your Christian life? Have you ever noticed when you compare your life with somebody, and, incidentally, we rarely ever compare our lives with someone who we don't think is doing better than we are; we always compare our lives, or seem to, with people who we think are doing better, making more money, have a bigger house, seem to be happier.

I've actually had people sit in my office (back when I had an office) and tell me things like, "I just want to be as happy as...", and then name some other family. That's happened. Well, the fact of the matter is, they're making a comparison, and they don't really even know what's going on behind closed doors with that other family.

Often I do, as a pastor and I'll tell them, that's really dumb to make that comparison, because you don't know. But comparisons are almost always bad because that also fosters discouragement. When you are constantly comparing yourself with other people, you get together and you pray with other people in a Bible study and you're like, "Man, I wish I could pray like that."

And you don't even want to pray anymore. You don't want to pray out loud anymore, because this person has such an ability to pray, and the words just flow out of their mouth. "I'll never be able to pray like that." So you stop doing it out of discouragement. Well, that's a foolish comparison. So, let me tell you this before we move on.

I said it before; I'll say it again. The enemy loves it when we get discouraged, and so he loves it when we make comparisons with one another, because he knows that's going to breed discouragement in our lives. And again, discouragement breeds paralysis and depression. So, why did God bring up this whole thing of the comparison?

It's because they were already doing it. He knew sixteen years ago that the old people were howling with sorrow because of what the foundation looked like. So He already knew. He's calling to their attention, these comparisons they're making, but He's doing it to make a point. He's not doing it to rebuke them.

And He begins here in verse 4 by saying, "*Yet now*, (and those two words are important because that signifies that God is going to bring a word of

comfort.) “*Yet now be strong. O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong. O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, ⁵according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit (oh, this is so good) remains in your midst.*”

And so He says, “⁵*Fear not.*” Do you see how many times in just that short section of Scripture, the Lord encourages the people. He says, “Listen, (this is what He's telling him) Listen, I know you guys are making comparisons. I know you are. But first of all, I want to tell you that I'm with you, and so I don't want you to be afraid, and I want you to stop making stupid comparisons because, you know what? That's not going to help anything. These aren't the days of Solomon, and we can't go back there.

“This is where we are now. This is where we're living now. And so this is where we're going to live, right here, right now, right in this situation. And yes, this is the temple that I have you building. It may not look just like Solomon's temple, but this is what I have you doing. This is the ministry that you have for Me right now.

“So be satisfied doing what you're doing because I'm with you, and I've promised never to leave you. So fear not.” But He's not done because not only has He told them, He's given them a word for the present, but now He's going to go on, and He's going to give them a word for the future. “⁶*For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.*”

The Jews of Judah had just been through a shaking. They had been taken away from their homeland, carted off to the Babylonian Empire. Lived there for a period of almost seventy years, and that is a shaking. Can you imagine? Can you imagine if a world power came and invaded the United States of America and carried us off? Carried us off to live in a foreign country where we'd never lived before, and we're living around people that have completely different values, completely different beliefs.

Imagine. That's a shaking, people. But what is God saying now? He says, “In a little while, I'm going to shake the heavens and the earth.” And that's not a metaphoric statement. That's a literal statement, right? He's telling them that there is a greater judgment that is coming. “Yes, you got shaken by the judgment that I brought into your life when the Babylonians overtook you. But let me tell you something. There's a shaking that's going to be worldwide, that's coming.”

God says in verse 7, this is important because now he's prophesying in the distant future, *"⁷And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts."* (Because, you know what?) *⁸The silver is mine and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts."* You see, you know what the people were doing when they were comparing this meager temple to what Solomon had built? They were saying, "Do you guys remember the silver and gold that Solomon built this temple with? Do you remember all the gold, all the silver? It shone in the sun. The sun would hit it, and it was practically blinding. It was so beautiful."

And what does God say? "Listen, yes, Solomon had a lot of silver and gold. I own it all. I own it all. And let me tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to fill this house one day with such glory, and all of the goods, and all of the wealth and all the prosperity of the nations are going to pour into this house. I know you're looking at it, and it's meager today, but I want you to know what I'm going to do in the future."

And look what He goes on to say in verse 9: *"⁹The latter glory of this house, (and He's talking about during the Millennial Kingdom, after the Great Tribulation) the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place, I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts."*

This is what God is saying, "I know you guys are comparing what you're building right now to Solomon's temple, and it doesn't even begin to hold a candle. Let me tell you something. I've got plans, and I want you to know that. I've got plans.

"And yeah, this is going to be meager for a while, but I've got plans, and there's coming a day, and I'm telling you about this ahead of time, when I am going to build this temple, and I'm going to shake the world. I'm literally going to shake the earth, and all of the nations are going to be shaken, and all of their wealth and all of their goods and all of their produce are going to be brought into this house. And there is going to be such glory in this house that there's going to be so much greater than Solomon's glory. You won't— you talk about comparing— you won't even begin to compare the glory that's going to be in the latter house."

You know why? Because the Lord Himself is going to be there, and He's going to be on the throne. Do you remember when Solomon built his temple? And they dedicated the temple in the presence of the Lord. Literally, the Shekinah glory of the Lord so filled the temple that the priests couldn't go in. They

couldn't go in and do their ministrations.(1Kings 8:10-11) They were like, “Oh, we can't even enter, the glory of the Lord is so thick.” That was this Shekinah glory, and it was a wonderful thing. But can I tell you it's going to be even greater? It's going to be even greater during the Millennial Kingdom when Jesus himself sits on the throne of Israel, there in Jerusalem, there on Mount Zion.

That glory is going to be even greater. And so this is such an incredible statement. Now, verses 10 -19, I want you to know before we read them, they contain a promise from the Lord of the future abundance of the people in the current present time, predicated upon their obedience to responding to Haggai's prophecy and getting up and getting busy finishing the temple.

So He's going to tell them here, I'm going to reverse the issues that I had laid upon you before. It says, *“¹⁰On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, ¹¹Thus says the LORD of hosts: Ask the priests about the law: ¹²If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?”*

“The priests answered and said, “No.”¹³Then Haggai said, “If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?” “The priest answered and said, ‘It does become unclean.’¹⁴Then Haggai answered and said, “So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, declares the LORD, and so with every work of their hands. And what they offer there is unclean.”

In other words, what he's telling them is when you're in the midst of your disobedience, all things are unclean. But in the midst of your obedience, all things are being made clean. and acceptable to the Lord. And that's the picture he's giving.

“¹⁵Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the LORD, ¹⁶how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. (There were only 10 measures to be found.)When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. ¹⁷I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me,’ declares the LORD.

¹⁸Consider from this day onward from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid, consider: ¹⁹Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But, from this day on, I will bless you.”

So here's what he's doing. He's literally giving them a day on the calendar, and he says, from the day that you began to walk in obedience to Me, according to the word of Haggai, I'm going to start blessing you again.

In other words, that curse that the Lord had brought upon the land to stymie and hold back the production of the land, is now being lifted, God is saying. Because, why? You're now walking in obedience and because of your obedience; now all things are made clean and acceptable to the Lord.

All right, finally, we come to the fourth and the final message from the Lord through Haggai, and this is a very special and a very personal word to one man who was functioning as a governor of the land, and that is the man Zerubbabel. But there's a couple of things I need to tell you about Zerubbabel before we get started.

And I need you to pay attention because, if you don't get this, you're not going to get the message. First of all, Zerubbabel was a man who was in the lineage of David. So he was a man who potentially could have been king if it had not been for his grandfather, which I'll explain in a moment. But he was in the lineage of David, and that's one of the reasons he was called upon to be the governor of the land.

Do you understand that when God exiled his people to the Babylonian kingdom or Empire, he did that for two reasons. It was to deliver them from two things: first, from their paganism, which he did when they came back from Babylon and their exile, they never again worshiped pagan idols. Never again.

He literally broke them of that issue, and he did it by sending them to a pagan nation. Actually it was two pagan nations, if you figure Babylon and the Medo-Persian Empire who took over while they were. And there was so much rampant paganism, it literally cured them. (It's kind of like, well, I won't say what it's kind of like.)

Anyway, it literally took care of things. But there was another thing he delivered them from while they were there, and that was the monarchy. You'll remember that God never intended for them to have a monarchy. He was to be their king. And during the ministry of the last judge, which was Samuel, the people cried out and said, we want a king just like our neighboring nations or countries.

And, you'll remember, Samuel was very distraught about their request. And he went to the Lord and the Lord said, "Listen, it's not you they're rejecting. It's

Me.” And so the Lord took it as a rejection, and it was. And so the other thing that they were cured of while they were there was this monarchy.

They had governors after that point, but never a king, and they have never had a king since that day. Israel will never have a king until the King of Kings sits on the throne and rules and reigns when He returns to this earth and fights on behalf of Israel. So, those things were literally taken away from the people of Israel.

You might be saying, “Well, now wait a minute. What about Herod? And those kings during the time of Jesus?” Herod wasn't a Jew. You guys remember that Herod was an Edomite, and Herod was put there by Rome. So this was not a continuation of the monarchy of Israel. The Herods were not Jewish, a very important thing to keep in mind.

So here we go. Now this is a word to Zerubbabel, who is a descendant of King David, but you need to understand something else. His great-grandfather was one of the last rightful legitimate kings of Judah, and his grandfather's name was Jechoniah, also known as Coniah. And he was a horrible man. In fact, he was so horrible, God cursed him and said, “No one from your lineage will ever sit on the throne ever again.” And that's how serious it was. We'll talk more about that, but here's what it says in verse 20, and following ^{“20}*The word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month.* (So this is the same day this previous word came.)

²¹*Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, “I am about to shake the heavens and the earth ²²and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother.”*

And this is basically just a repeat of what Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about (Daniel 2:31-45) When he saw this stone hewn out of the mountain (v.45) roll down the hill and break that statue that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream that represented all of the Gentile nations. It broke into pieces. And this is the same idea. God is telling Zerubbabel, “I'm going to destroy all of the Gentile nations in the coming days.”

Here we go. ^{“23}*On that day, declares the LORD of hosts (on what day? Well, the day when the Lord destroys all of the nations) I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts.”*

All right, now let me tell you what's going on here. The Lord says to Zerubbabel, I'm going to make you like my signet ring. Now, what was a signet ring? It was a ring that had the crest of the king on it, and it would be given to his faithful servants that they might speak and act with the king's authority. So if I had the signet ring of the king, I could go somewhere and make an edict on behalf or in the name of the king and say, here's the king's ring.

And so I would have it written on parchment, and they'd put that clay kind of stuff. And I would press the ring into that clay. And when the people read that edict or that proclamation, they would say, "well, that's the king's sign. That's his signature." It's where we get the signet. And you could literally speak for the king.

What is God telling Zerubbabel? "I'm going to make you my signet ring." Now keep that in mind. Here's the deal. The challenging words of the prophecy are the words "²³*On that day*" because Zerubbabel lived around 580 BC and yet the Lord says, "On the day that I destroy the Gentile nations." That talks about when He establishes His kingdom in the Millennial Age.

He says, "I'm going to make you my signet ring '*on that day*.'" Well, let me tell you, Bible scholars and commentators just go nuts with this prophecy, and they don't know how to interpret it because they refuse to interpret it literally. They refuse to believe that God is going to raise up Zerubbabel during the Millennial Kingdom to be his signet ring.

But that is what God is saying. God also says elsewhere that He's going to raise up David to rule over Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom. And my response is, "Why not?" We know that the Old Testament saints are going to be raised from the dead at the end of the tribulation period going into the millennial kingdom.

So here, these guys are all going to be with us, along with the church. So that's the question we have to ask. Is it possible that the Lord is promising Zerubbabel that during the millennial kingdom, He's going to raise him up to serve him in a wonderful and exalted position? Well, I think it is very possible, but there's more to this personal word than you know. Do you remember I told you that his great-grandfather was Jechoniah? And remember I told you that Jechoniah was cursed by God and told that none of his descendants would ever sit on the throne of Israel? That's a really interesting statement, because God used the same symbol of a signet ring that he just gave to Zerubbabel back when he spoke about Jechoniah and gave that curse. And I want you to see what he said on the screen.

(slide)

Jeremiah 22:24-26 (ESV)

As I live, declares the LORD, though Coniah (and again, that's another form of Jechoniah) the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet ring on my right hand, yet I would tear you off and give you into the hand of those who seek your life, into the hand of those of whom you are afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans. I will hurl you and the mother who bore you into another country, where you were not born, and there you shall die.

That's what God said to Zerubbabel's great-grandpa. Now, I didn't read for you the prophecy about the fact that no man from his line would be king, but it's there, would ever sit on the throne of Israel? Can you imagine what it would have been like for Zerubbabel? Now he's been named Governor of the land. He knows he's in the lineage of David, but he also knows that his great-grandfather was Jechoniah, King Jechoniah. And he knows that his great-grandfather was cursed by God.

And he knows, and I'm willing to bet, he remembers the prophecy of Jeremiah that said, "If you were my signet ring, I'd tear you off and throw you away and hand you over to those you fear." Can you imagine what life would've been like for a man like Zerubbabel to live under the shadow of the curse of your great-grandfather?

Can you imagine what that would've been like? So the last thing the Lord says through Haggai is, "I've chosen you to be my signet ring. I've chosen you, Zerubbabel." Do you see what the Lord is doing? Do you see the mercy of God? Zerubbabel isn't going to sit on any kind of a throne. That's fine. That curse to his great-grandfather's line, that stands.

But still does that mean that everybody in Jechoniah's family line is a cursed human being? Heavens no. You serve the Lord, you walk with God, and what does the Lord say? "I've chosen you. I've chosen you as my signet ring, and I'm going to elevate you to an exalted and wonderful position one day. On that day."

I expect to meet Zerubbabel one day. And to, and I don't know how this is going to play out in terms of what it means for him to be the signet ring of the Lord, but he's going to have authority during the Millennial Kingdom to do things in the name of the Lord and in the goodness of God. And it's going to be very cool to see all of these prophecies brought to fruition.

So that's where we end with the book of Haggai. What an incredible prophetic book it is. So let's pray. Father, we thank You so much for this study of Haggai. We thank You, Lord, for the things that You've spoken, the words that have been given. And we thank You, Lord, for the reminders of Your character.

Lord, we're reminded of our own propensity to fall into discouragement when things aren't going the way they should, or at least the way we think they should. And when life gets hard, and our struggle becomes a stressful, straining sort of a thing, and we feel like giving in, and we justify it just like the Jews did, saying, "It's not time."

Lord, it's always time to walk in obedience to You and help us to remember that tonight and going forward. Help us to remember, Lord, we've been called to a particular ministry, and it's time to walk it out, carry it out, to do the will of the Lord, and to serve for Your good pleasure. Now, Lord, I thank You, too, for that incredibly lovely thing that you spoke to Zerubbabel at the end of this prophetic book, calling him out from under the shadow of his great-grandfather and the curse that was laid upon him for his disobedience. But reminding Zerubbabel that as he walked with God, as he lived a life of obedience and devotion, that he was now the chosen of the Lord. And what a wonderful reminder that is for all of us. Thank You, Father, for this study. Thank You for Your goodness. Thank you for Your grace.

We lay our hearts at Your feet. We ask You to guide and direct us in the name of Jesus who is the Savior and King. Amen.