



Haggai

Get Started

We had paid off the land we purchased in record time. We were in meetings with architects and had a great floor plan. A bank specializing in Christian organizations had agreed to lend us up to \$1million.

We were pretty stoked... Until the cost estimates starting coming in. To build a very basic, no frills, bare bones, metal building within which we'd still have to hold multiple services would be \$3.5million.

"No problem," said the architects. "Start a capital campaign and get your people to dig deep."

It was a watershed moment. I'd seen lots of other churches start asking for money. Even other Calvary's. In fact, the counsel I was receiving from a lot of guys was to put pressure on the congregation.

It was really, really hard to get up on Sunday morning and announce that our building project was on indefinite hold. It seemed like a failure; and some folks saw it that way.

But once our eyes were off of the problem, so to speak - off of the new construction - we saw that there were facilities available for us to purchase.

This facility, for example, which was more than twice as big as what we were looking at building at less than one-fourth the cost.

The rest is history.

I was reminded of all this because Haggai has a passage that is often used (out of context I think) during a building project.

Hag 1:2 "Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built." ' "

Hag 1:3 Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying,

Hag 1:4 "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"

Hag 1:5 Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!

Seems straightforward enough. God's house was neglected while the people built their own homes.

True enough; but I think we need to understand that the Temple in Jerusalem was a slightly more significant structure than any church building project.

A better application of Haggai would be to look at our bodies, as temples of the Holy Spirit, and at our church body, as His dwelling place.

Get Studying

Haggai called upon God's people to review their progress in rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem. Let me give you a brief sketch of the events leading up to his exhortation.

The Temple was destroyed by the invading Babylonian armies in 586BC. As exiles in Babylon for seventy-years, the Jews were without a temple and without their sacrifices. Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians. Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, gave permission for almost 50,000 Jews to return to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel as their leader and accompanied by Joshua the high priest and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

Sacrifices were soon reinstated on a rebuilt altar for burnt offerings, and in the second year of the return the foundation of the Temple was laid.

However, Samaritan harassment and eventual Persian pressure brought a halt to the rebuilding of the Temple.

Then spiritual indifference set in; and for about sixteen more years - until the rule of the Persian king, Darius Hystaspes (521-486BC) - the construction of the Temple was discontinued.

In the second year of Darius (520BC) God raised up Haggai the prophet to encourage the Jews in the rebuilding of the Temple. His task was to arouse the leaders and the people of Judah from their spiritual apathy and to encourage them to continue working.

Haggai is the first of three post -exile prophets who ministered in Judah to the tiny community established after the Jews were permitted to return to their homeland.

Haggai, whose name means “festal,” or “festival,” appears briefly in Judah to accomplish a specific mission. His carefully dated sermons focus our attention on a four-month period in 520BC, when Haggai called God’s people to complete rebuilding of God’s

The Jews were dedicated to rebuilding the Temple but had discontinued due to difficulty and then indifference.

I suggest to you that this pattern can and does occur in the lives of believers in the church: Dedication is always confronted with difficulty; difficulty can lead to indifference which causes you to discontinue **your** spiritual building project.

Haggai 1:2 “Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: ‘This people says, “The time has not come, the time that the LORD’S house should be built.”””

They had returned with real dedication to rebuild. Strong opposition had risen up against them. They interpreted the difficulties as a sign from God they were to quit. But they were wrong.

Of course there would be opposition. They ought to have expected it. They were doing a spiritual work for God and the enemies of God, inspired by supernatural forces, were bound to come against it and them.

If you are in the will of God, you expect difficulties and press forward. You resolve the problem of interpreting difficulties by knowing that the project you are dedicated to is God’s will.

Sometimes you might press for something that you want that is not really God’s will; that’s another message.

When difficulties are allowed to defeat your dedication, you grow indifferent and become complacent. Excuses are the evidence of complacency. You start making excuses for falling-off in your dedication to serve the Lord.

The Jews said it wasn't the Lord's time to build. We sometimes say we don't have the time. We have a lot of excuses for accepting the status-quo in our spiritual lives. Complacency sets you up for conformity:

Haggai 1:3 Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying,

Haggai 1:4 "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"

Once the building project at the Temple stopped, the Jews turned to their own homes. Their enemies did not oppose them building their own homes – only God's Temple. As long as the Jews were like everyone else, pursuing the things everyone else pursued, they were no threat.

In other words, as long as they conformed to the world they were left alone to pursue the things of the world. Rather than making an impact on the world around them, the world was making an impact upon the people of God.

Haggai 1:5 Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts:

"Consider your ways!

Haggai 1:6 "You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes."

The Jews were not able to find satisfaction in the world. The people of God can never truly be satisfied in or by the world. We must seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness. Our values must be spiritual and eternal.

Haggai 1:7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways!
Haggai 1:8 Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,” says the LORD.

“Consider your ways” is the phrase that best summarizes Haggai. He uses the word “consider” four times in his four messages in these two chapters. “Consider your ways”; or, as I am suggesting, review your spiritual building project for progress.

Haggai 1:9 “You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?” says the LORD of hosts. “Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house.

Haggai 1:10 Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit.

Haggai 1:11 For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands.”

God has saved you for something greater than the things that this world has to offer. By His marvelous providence, He will reveal to you the emptiness of living for yourself and the glories of living for Him.

You see their obedience in verse twelve:

Haggai 1:12 Then 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, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the LORD.

The key word in verse twelve is obvious: obeyed. Rededication is simply submitting to God by obeying His Word. God's Word is usually pretty obvious. When you disobey it's usually not because you don't understand God's Word, but because you won't submit to God's Word as your rule of life and conduct.

Christians convince themselves that they are unable to obey God's Word when, in truth, they are unwilling to obey it. They convince themselves that God is withholding the power they need to obey. Just the opposite is true! God's Word which commands and compels you also empowers and enables you. One dear saint put it like this: "I know the power obedience has of making things easy which seem impossible." That is the attitude you need to adopt.

In the months following the resumption of reconstruction, the Lord gave Haggai messages of encouragement for the builders.

Hag 2:3 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?

Hag 2:4 Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the LORD; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the LORD, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the LORD of hosts.

Hag 2:5 'According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'

Hag 2:6 "For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; Hag 2:7 and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.

Hag 2:8 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts.

Hag 2:9 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts."

Perhaps recalling the discouragement that had helped end the earlier efforts (see Ezra 3:12), Haggai acknowledged that this second Temple would lack the grandeur of Solomon's Temple (2:3) but gave assurance that God was with them (2:4–5) and that he had great plans for this new Temple (2:6–9).

The argument Haggai made was profound. The discouragers were looking back at the grandeur of the former Temple when they should have been looking forward to the glory of the future Temple.

In the mean time, it is glory, not grandeur, that ought to be the focus. It is the presence of God among His people that is glorious.

The encouragement Haggai gave was to keep looking forward, beyond their present situation, to the ultimate fulfillment of an eternal plan of which they were an integral part. Though their part might seem small and insignificant, it was no less vital a link in the chain of spiritual history and progress than any other link.

Looking forward to the ultimate fulfillment of which you play a part always hastens the progress of God's building project. You see this in the New Testament writing of the apostle Peter. He mentions the last days of human history, then says, in Second Peter 3:11-14,

2 Peter 3:11 KJV Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

2 Peter 3:12 KJV Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

2 Peter 3:13 KJV Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

2 Peter 3:14 KJV Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Looking forward to the ultimate fulfillment of God's plans hastens the progress of the spiritual building project.

Get Spiritual

For the Jews, the building project was the Temple. What exactly is your spiritual building project?

- As a Christian, your individual life is a spiritual building project. Your marriage, your family, your career, your hobbies, your recreations – all of these and everything else in your life are a spiritual building project to be dedicated to God. You are to build them using the methods and materials revealed to you by God. You should expect to encounter difficulties; but, when you

do, you should remain dedicated rather than allow difficulties to defeat you by halting your progress.

- As a Christian, your corporate life with other believers is also a spiritual building project. The church as a group is God's spiritual building on earth. You are called to serve others, and gifted in certain ways by God's Spirit. We are to work together using the right methods and materials to accomplish the spiritual service God has planned for us. We should expect to encounter difficulties; but when we do, we should remain dedicated rather than allow difficulties to defeat us by halting our progress.

Submit yourself to a review of your spiritual building project. You should see that you have remained dedicated to the spiritual projects God has given you.

If you have not remained dedicated, ***then it's time to be rededicated.***