

Haggai Chapter 1

It is believed, by many scholars, that Haggai the prophet was born during the Babylonian captivity. In 539 B.C. Babylon fell and the Jews returned to Israel. One of the first projects was the rebuilding of the temple. They laid the foundation, and problems arose with the neighboring people. They stopped construction on the temple.

God raised up Haggai and Zechariah to prophesy to them of the need of rebuilding the temple. In Ezra's time, they began again to rebuild the temple.

Verses 1-11: Discouraged by the opposition of her neighbors (Ezra 4:1-5, 24), the people had wrongly concluded that it was not yet time for them to rebuild the temple (verse 2).

With a biting query, the Lord reminded them that it was not right for them to live in paneled houses while the temple lay in ruins (verse 4), and urged them to consider carefully the consequences of their indifference (verses 5-11).

Haggai 1:1 "In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,"

“Second year of Darius the king”: Not to be confused with Darius the Mede (Dan. 5:31). Darius became king of Persia (in 521 B.C.), having ascended to the throne after the death of Cambyses.

As an officer of Cambyses and the great-grandson of Cyrus the Great's brother, Darius retained the loyalty of the Persian army and thereby defeated other contenders for the throne. He reigned until his death (in 486 B.C.).

“Darius” refers to Darius I (Hystaspis), the ruler of Persia (from 521 to 486 B.C.). The “sixth month” was the month of Elul (and corresponds to August 29, 520 B.C.).

“Zerubbabel” was the governor of Judah, and was the leader recognized by the Jews. He was a descendant of “Shealtiel” and was the grandson of Jehoiachin, (Jeconiah in Matthew 1:12; 1 Chron. 3:17, 19), and thus he was in the Davidic line.

Though it is highly questionable if he is to be identified with Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:8, 11; 5:14, 16), his role as civil leader (Ezra 2:2), and overseer of the temple rebuilding project (Zech. 4:6-10), is certain.

(In 1 Chronicles 3:17-19), Zerubbabel's father is listed as Pedaiah, the brother of Shealtiel. Apparently Salathiel died without a son and his brother “Pedaiah,” married his widow and gave birth to “Zerubbabel. The purpose of such a levirate marriage was to maintain the dead husband's line; hence Zerubbabel was legally the son of Salathiel.

Shealtiel was cursed by God (in Jeremiah 22:4), and could not be in the line of Jesus. He ruled only 3 months and 10 days (2 Chron. 36:9; in 598-597 B.C.), and was taken into captivity, where he lived out his life.

Zerubbabel reestablished the Davidic throne, even though it will not again be occupied until the time of Messiah (Psalm 2:110).

The high priest, "Joshua," was "the son of Josedech" (also known as Jozadak (Ezra 3:2); and as Jehozadak (1 Chron. 6:15), who had been the "High Priest" at the time Judah was carried captive into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.

Spelled Jeshua (in Ezra 3), Joshua was a descendant of Zadok (1 Chron. 6:15), and the religious leader of the exilic community that returned to Jerusalem. He reestablished the high-priestly line of Aaron through Eleazar.

Haggai addresses the civil and the religious representatives of the people, so as to have them as his associates in giving God's commands. Thus priest, prophet, and ruler jointly testify in God's name.

It appears that Haggai had returned to Judah by permission of Cyrus in the first year of the reign of Darius. Zerubbabel was reigning as governor of Judah at this time.

God sent the message by Haggai to Zerubbabel, because he was in charge. Joshua was the High Priest at the time and the message was sent to him also. Zerubbabel was descended from the family of David, and Joshua was descended from Aaron.

Verses 2-6: "Ceiled houses" refers to ceilings paneled with fine woods. Such a practice was common for the residences of kings (1 Kings 7:7; Jer. 22:14). In contrast, the Lord's house lay in ruins.

The command, "Consider your ways," is issued five times throughout the course of this prophecy (verses 5, 7, 2:15, 18). It is a plea on the part of God for the people to take note of what they are doing, and amend their ways accordingly.

Haggai 1:2 "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built."

"This people say": Haggai begins his message by quoting a popular expression of the people, saying it was not time to build the temple. Though propelled by the hostile opposition of their neighbors (Ezra 4:1-5, 24), and the lack of economic prosperity (verses 9-11), the roots of their reluctance lay ultimately in their selfish indifference to the Lord.

God's displeasure is noted in His reference to them as "This people" and not "My people." They wanted their wealth for themselves, not a temple.

We noted earlier, that the return of Judah, had immediately built the foundation for the temple in Jerusalem. That really was as far as they got. The opposition of neighbors, and excuses pertaining to their own homes being built, stopped them from going any further.

They kept putting off the building of the Lord's house, saying, the time was not right. God now sends them a message by Haggai, showing His displeasure at their attitude.

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

And the word of the Lord came. "Before, he prophesied nothing, but only recited the saying of the people. Now he refutes it in his prophecy, and repeats, again and again, that he says this not of himself, but from the mind and mouth of God."

It is characteristic of Haggai to inculcate thus frequently, that his words are not his own, but the words of God. Yet "the prophets, both in their threats and prophecies, repeat again and again, "Thus saith the Lord." Teaching us, how we should prize the word of God, hang upon it, have it ever in our mouth, reverence, ruminate on, utter, praise it, make it our continual delight."

Again, it is emphasized that the message, coming from the mouth of Haggai, was really the Word of the Lord.

Haggai 1:4 "(Is it) time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house (lie) waste?"

"This house lie waste" (see Ezra 3:1-13), for the start of the second temple. Selfish indulgence, revealed by the prophet's rhetorical query, demonstrated their hypocrisy and misplaced priorities. Walls and ceilings overlaid with cedar were common in wealthy residences (1 Kings 7:3, 7; Jeremiah 22:14).

They had not followed the following Scripture:

Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

They were more concerned with their own homes, than they were in the house of God. They should have built the temple first.

Haggai 1:5 "Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways."

"Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts": The Lord God omniscient and omnipotent, that saw all their actions, and could punish for them; since they were so careful of their own houses, and adorning them, and so careless of his house. He would have them now sit down, and seriously think of these things, and of what he should further observe unto them.

"Consider your ways": Their sinful ways, and repent of them, and forsake them. Particularly their ingratitude before observed; and their civil ways, their common ways of life. Their labor,

work, and business, they were continually employed in. And observe the event of them; what success they had, what these issued in.

Whether there were not some visible tokens of the divine displeasure on them, which rendered all their attempts to support and enrich themselves and families vain, and of no effect. And they would do well to consider to what all this was to be imputed; whether it was not chiefly owing to this, their neglect of the house of God.

And this he would have considered, not in a slight cursory way; but with great earnestness, diligence, and application of mind. "Put", or "set your hearts upon your ways"; so it may be literally rendered.

They have just been released from 70 years of captivity in Babylon, because of their indifference to God. Now, they are doing the same things all over again. Perhaps, they should consider what they are doing. It is as if God is questioning whether they have really changed or not.

Haggai 1:6 "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."

Using 5 pairs of poetic contrasts, each concluding essentially the same thing, Haggai painted a vivid picture of their economic and social distress. Their selfish lack of concern for God's house had only caused them more hardship (Matt. 6:33). This was Solomon's message in Ecclesiastes, restated, "All is vanity."

Their labors are not blessed of God. Because of their selfishness, they have not given anything to God for Him to multiply back to them. They labor, but in vain.

Malachi 3:9-11 "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)." "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts."

They had already forgotten that God blesses their generosity, not their greed.

Haggai 1:7 "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways."

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways": What they have been; what has been the consequence of them; and to what the above things are to be ascribed. This exhortation is repeated, to impress it the more upon their minds; and to denote the importance of it, and the necessity of such a conduct (see Haggai 1:5).

This is another warning to examine their actions, and see whether they are pleasing to God, or not. Haggai says, "You had better consider what you are doing".

Haggai 1:8 "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord."

“Go up ... bring wood ... build”: Three imperatives give the remedy for their trouble. The long captivity of 70 years had let the forests grow so there was ample wood. They were to use it to rebuild the house of the Lord, and therein He would be glorified. By putting God first, He would then be honored in their worship and they would be blessed in the secondary matters of life.

Compare this pitiful project (Ezra 3:12; Hag. 2:3), to the opulence of Solomon’s first temple (1 Chron. chapters 28 and 29; and 2 Chron. chapters 2 to 6).

There was much wood in the very close proximity of the temple area. They could get the wood to build the temple there. God would be pleased with their building. It would not have to have the cedars of Lebanon. When they build the house of the Lord first, it glorifies God and man.

Haggai 1:9 "Ye looked for much, and, lo, (it came) to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? Saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that (is) waste, and ye run every man unto his own house."

“Run every man unto his own house”: Because the Jews were zealous to pursue their own interests, the prophet drew a contrast between the one who eagerly ran to care for “his own house,” while disregarding God’s house (“My house”).

God did not bless them, because they had forgotten Him. The temple was for God, and for man. It was a place of fellowship. God loved these people. He wanted to be near them. They wanted a rich harvest, but they had forgotten who sent the big harvest. They hurried and built their own houses, but forgot about God's house.

It had been over 15 years since they had put the foundation of the house down, and they had not built upon it. It is as if they have forgotten God.

Verses 10-11: Economic catastrophe, resulting from God’s withholding of the summer dew, was the price for their disobedience (Deut. 7:13). Grain, wine, and oil were the primary crops of the land. Cattle also languished because of the absence of spiritual health (Joel 1:18-20).

Haggai 1:10 "Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed (from) her fruit."

“Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew”: It appears from the following verse that God had sent a drought upon the land, which threatened them with scarcity and famine.

God will not send the dew they need, or multiply their fruit. Until they build Him His house. It is a sin of omission. They have omitted the worship of God from their lives.

Leviticus 26:19 " And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass:"

Haggai 1:11 "And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon (that) which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands."

“And I called for a drought upon the land”: God called to the people and they would not hear. It is His ever-repeated complaint to them. "I called unto you, and ye would not hear." He called to His inanimate creatures to punish them, and "they" obeyed.

So Elisha tells the woman, whose son he had restored to life:

2 Kings 8:1 "The Lord hath called for a famine, and it shall also come upon the land seven years."

Seven year famines were known in the ancient Near East (see Gen. 41:29-32).

“And upon men”: In that the drought was oppressive to man. The prophet may also allude to the other meaning of the word, "waste," "desolation." They had left the house of the Lord "waste," therefore God called for waste and desolation upon them.

The only times these people reach out to God, is when they are in need. It sounds a bit like us, doesn't it? God will bring the drought to get them to repent, and do their first work. The drought cuts off food for man and beast. Their labor will be in vain. Without rain, nothing will grow.

Verses 12-15: Haggai's second message came 23 days after the first one (verse 15; around September 21, 520 B.C.). The Lord's call to "Consider your ways" (verses 5-7), caused the people to respond in repentance and obedience (verse 12). This new message "I am with you" further stirred the Jews to action (verses 13-14).

“The remnant of the people”: The exiles who returned from Babylon took the message to heart. Realizing that the words of the prophet were from the Lord, they “obeyed” and “showed reverence,” knowing that God was present.

Haggai 1:12 "Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, 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 did fear before the LORD."

"Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech the High Priest": Here follows an account of the success of Haggai's prophecy. With what power and efficacy the word of the Lord by him was attended. How it at once reached and affected the hearts of princes and people, and brought them to obedience to the will of God.

The governor and High Priest are mentioned first, as being the principal persons and who very probably first declared their sense of their former neglect, and their readiness to do as they were directed. Which was setting a good example to the people, and doubtless had some influence upon them.

"With all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God": Not the two leading men in church and state only; but all the people that came out of the Babylonian captivity, who were but a remnant.

A few that were left through various calamities they had been exposed unto. These, one and all, signified how willing and ready they were to do the work of the Lord enjoined them.

Or, "they heard the voice of the Lord"; by the prophet, very attentively and seriously. And received and regarded it, not as the word of men, but as the word of God. And determined to act according to it.

"And the words of Haggai the prophet": Or, "and for the words of Haggai the prophet"; because of them, considering them as coming from the Lord himself. As the Lord their God had sent him; regarding him as having a mission and commission from the Lord to deliver the words to them.

"And the people did fear before the Lord": Perceiving that he was displeased with them for the neglect of his house; and that this drought upon them was a chastisement and correction for this sin. And fearing lest his wrath should continue, and they should be more severely dealt with on account of their transgressions.

It took drastic measures, but they finally agreed they had neglected the work of the Lord. The governor Zerubbabel led the way, and the priest Joshua, followed with him. The people followed, as well. Haggai had convinced them, that God would not bless them, until they began building the temple.

They accepted Haggai's words as being the Words of the Lord, and they agreed to work on the temple. The fear of the LORD caused the people to do what Haggai said they must do, if they were to be blessed.

Haggai 1:13 "Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, I (am) with you, saith the LORD."

"I am with you": The people were oppressed by hostilities from without and famine from within. The Lord responded to their genuine repentance and obedience, assuring them of His presence with them. This should have evoked a memory of God's Word to Joshua and the returning people centuries before (Joshua 1:5).

The LORD was quick to answer them through the words in Haggai's mouth. If they would seek God first, God would bless them and their work. The blessings of God are upon a people who are anxious to please the LORD. God is always ready to accept our repentance for our sins, and to bless us in our walk with Him.

Haggai was the LORD's messenger. He was like an ambassador that takes someone else's message to the people.

Haggai 1:14 "And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,"

“Stirred up the spirit”: The Lord energized the leaders and the people through His Word to carry on the work of rebuilding the temple. God had sovereignly moved in the heart of Cyrus 16 years earlier (2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-3). The people’s response of repentance and obedience allowed God’s Spirit to energize them for the task.

Their indifference was over. Once they had committed to the work, the Spirit of the LORD filled them all. The Spirit was a confirmation that the LORD was pleased with their decision. The Spirit gave them the strength to do the work, as well. They took one step forward to God, and He met them. The work is, now, begun.

Haggai 1:15 "In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king."

"In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month": Or, "in the four and twentieth of the month, in the sixth". In that sixth month before mentioned (Haggai 1:1).

On this day they came and worked; not the sixth from Tisri, for the Jews had two ways of beginning their years, which would have answered to part of February. And therefore, chose by some interpreters as being a proper time to begin building.

But no regard is had to the fitness of the season, but to the order of the Lord. But the sixth month from Nisan, and answers to part of August. For so the months are reckoned in the prophecy of Zechariah, who began to prophecy the same year as Haggai did (see Zech. 1:1; 7:1). This was three and twenty days after the prophecy was delivered out.

During which time they might be employed in cutting of stones, and sawing and hewing of wood, as Jarchi suggests, and preparing for work in the temple.

In the second year of Darius the king (See Hag. 1:1). Here some begin a new chapter, but wrongly. Since, if these words do not belong to the preceding, there would be a contradiction in joining them with the beginning of the next.

It appears that 23 days after Haggai began to prophesy about the rebuilding of the temple, the work began. This is approximately 3-1/2 weeks. This was one of the quickest fulfillments of a prophecy ever given. The people had immediately responded to Haggai's warnings.

Haggai Chapter 1 Questions

1. When was Haggai born?
2. What year did Babylon fall?
3. What was one of the Jews first projects, when they got home?
4. Who were the two prophets God raised up to remind them of the need of building the temple?
5. Who was in power, when they rebuilt the temple?
6. When did Haggai begin to prophesy?
7. Who did Haggai speak his message from God to?
8. Zerubbabel was governor of _____.
9. Who was the high priest?
10. Where did this Darius rule?
11. Who had given Haggai permission to return to Judah?
12. Who was Zerubbabel descended from?
13. Who was Joshua descended from?
14. What does the LORD of hosts say to the people in verse 2?
15. What had the people built, immediately on their return from captivity?
16. They were more concerned with their own _____ , than they were the _____ of God.
17. What did God tell them to consider?
18. How many years had they been in captivity?
19. Why are their labors not producing results?
20. Where could they get the wood for the temple?
21. The temple was a place of _____.
22. What did God call for to get them to listen?
23. Who led the way obeying the voice of God?
24. What caused the people to build on the temple?
25. What reassuring words did God send them?

26. The LORD stirred up their _____.

27. How quickly after Haggai's prophecy, did they begin the building?