

Haggai 1:1-15

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Restoring the God-Fearing Community

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HG1701

A Word From The Lord

INTRODUCTION: Two prophets served the repatriated community, during the days of Ezra.

1. They are sometimes referred to as the Prophets of the Restoration: *Haggai and Zechariah*.
2. In 539/538 BC the Persian King **Cyrus the Great** allowed a remnant of Jews to return to Judea (Palestine).
 - a) 49,697 left Babylon with *Sheshbazzar* and *Zerubbabel* to return to the ruins of Jerusalem.
 - b) Many scholars think that number is exaggerated; i.e., too many to be realistic
 - c) But the Jewish people, to this day, share a genuine interest in resettling the “Holy Land.”
 - d) **Edwin M. Yamauchi**: *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Comm.*; “*Ezra and Nehemiah*,” p. 402
 - (1) *Scholars have doubted whether such a large number would initially have responded to Cyrus’s permission for the Jews to return to their homeland. But modern experiences in repatriating Jews to Israel have consistently shown enthusiastic responses in large numbers when such opportunities were presented.*
 - (2) *Operation Magic* (1950) 50,000 Yemenite Jews
 - (3) *Operation Ezra and Nehemiah* (1951, 1952) 130,000 Iraqi Jews
 - e) **David Ben-Gurion**, *First Israeli Prime Minister* (d. 1973); p. 402
 - (1) “*Almost the whole community of Babylonian exiles who stayed when Babylon was destroyed came to this country ten years ago – and their number was nearly thrice the number of those who returned to Zion in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.*” (c. 1964)
 - (2) *Operation Moses* (1985) 14,000 Falashas and Ethiopian Jews
 - (3) *Operation Solomon* (1985) 14,000 more Falashas to Israel.
 - (4) *Operation Exodus* (1989) 700,000 Soviet Jews to Israel!
 - (5) In 2003 less than 20 Jews lived in Baghdad, down from 150,000 in 1960! The rest had gone to Israel.
 - (6) There are 16 million Jews in the world, and 6.1 million live in Israel.
 - f) *The Jews love their homeland: The “Promised Land”*
 - (1) *Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord. (Gen. 12:7-8)*

(2) *When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, (Gen. 15:17-18)*

3. With this *Covenant* God made with Abraham and his descendants (the Hebrews/Jews) comes what scholars call "*The Theology of Deuteronomy*"

a) God's promise of Blessings for obedience ...

"And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. The Lord will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you undertake. And he will bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. The Lord will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in his ways. (Deut. 28:1-3, 8-9)

b) God's promise of cursing for apostasy ...

"But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. (Deut. 28:15-16)

And as the Lord took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the Lord will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it. "And the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the Lord will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. (Deut. 28:63-66)

c) God's promise to restore them to their land if they returned to the Lord ...

"And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. And the Lord your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. (Deut. 30:1-5)

4. This became the three phases of Israelite History, and Israel's prophets.

a) **God's Covenant Prosecutors**

b) i.e., They were God's spokesmen for the Deuteronomy Code.

c) **Willem A. VanGemeren:** *Interpreting the Prophetic Word; p. 37*

Elijah is the beginning of a long line of prophets who charged God's people with breaking the covenant and pronounced God's judgment on them. He was God's first covenant prosecutor, for he charged Israel with its failures to conform to the covenantal expectations. This is the essence of the prophetic lawsuit.

d) **Pre-exilic Prophets:** Moses, Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jonah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Nahum, Joel, Obadiah

e) **Exilic Prophets:** Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel

f) **Post-exilic Prophets:** Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

5. Just as God sent Israel into exile in three stages: 605 B.C. (*Daniel*), 595 B.C. (*Ezekiel*) and 586 B.C. (*Jeremiah*) ...

6. So God would restore the people to the Promised Land in three waves of returnees: 538/537 BC (*Zerubbabel*), 458 BC *Ezra* and 444 BC (*Nehemiah*).

7. During these years of Return, Restoration and Revival God placed His prophets in the Land: *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*.

8. Let me refresh the *chronology* of our story up to this point.

a) **Cyrus** decreed for the people to return (539-538 BC): *The First Wave* returns to Jerusalem.

(1) They build an altar to the Lord

(2) They lay the foundation of the Temple.

(3) In 537 they stop building because of opposition.

b) Cyrus died in 530 BC and **Cambyses** became king. He reigned almost 8 years and then committed suicide. (Or perhaps was assassinated to look like suicide) in 522 BC.

c) **Anthony R. Petterson:** *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi; Apollos Com; p. 24*

In January 522 BC, while Cambyses was in Egypt, one of the leaders in the court, Guamata, falsely claimed to be Cambyses' brother and led a revolt in Persia by taking the throne. Cambyses set out to return to Mesopotamia, but on the way accidentally stabbed himself in the thigh with his sword and died in April 522 BC. One of Cambyses' military commanders, Darius, raced back and assassinated Gaumata in September 522 BC with the help of a group of six leading nobles. With the death of Guamata, the Babylonian rival king Nidintu-Bel (Nebuchadnezzar IV), thought to be a son of Nabonidus, reasserted imperial authority over Babylonia in December 522 BC. That same month, he was defeated by Darius with the aid of elite Persian troops. A new revolt broke out in August 521 BC, led by the Armenian Arakha (Nebuchadnezzar V). He was finally deposed by Darius' commander in November 521 BC.

d) **Darius I**, a Persian general, grabbed the throne in 522 B.C., and during his rule *Haggai and Zechariah* began to preach.

e) *In 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, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: “Thus says the Lord of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.” Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, (Haggai 1:1-3)*

f) August 29, 520 B.C.

g) **Darius “The Mede” Hystaspers** was to rule for 36 years, until 486 B.C.

9. Haggai and Zechariah were raised up by God to urge the people of Israel to complete their work of rebuilding a God-fearing community ...

Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah 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. (Ezra 5:1)

10. In Haggai’s prophecy are four summary messages, all delivered in the time span of four months. Add to this one message from Zechariah in the same year (520 B.C.). The dates of these messages are ...

a) *Haggai 1:1* on August 29, 520 B.C.

b) *Haggai 2:1* on October 21, 520 B.C.

c) *Zechariah 1:1* in November, 520 B.C.

d) *Haggai 2:10* on December 18, 520 B.C.

e) *Haggai 2:20* on December 18, 520 B.C.

11. Haggai’s prophecies may be summarized by a phrase he repeats 5 times in this short book: “*Consider your ways*”

a) *Consider your ways (1:5, 1:7)*

b) *Consider from this day onward (2:15, 2:18a)*

c) *Consider (2:18b)*

I. HAGGAI’S FIRST SERMON: “Consider Your Ways” (Haggai 1:1-17)

A. The Message of Haggai (1:4-11)

1. *“Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. You 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. “Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. Go 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. You 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. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And 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.” (Haggai 1:4-11)*

2. Haggai draws a direct correlation between the financial struggles of the post-exilic community and their failure to put first the things of God.

3. The people were struggling with the tension between *creed* and *circumstance*; what they *believed* and what they *experienced*.
- a) They *believed* God wanted them to rebuild the Temple. They'd begun to do that 17 years earlier (537 BC)
 - b) Their *experience* told them otherwise. They'd experienced opposition from their neighbors.

Now when the adversaries 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." 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 the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build 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. (Ezra 4:1-5)
 - c) And so they'd come to this conclusion: *"The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord."* (v. 2)

"Thus says the Lord of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord." (Haggai 1:2)
 - d) And so they'd quit building ...

Then the work on the house of God that is in Jerusalem stopped, and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia. (Ezra 4:24)
4. Haggai preaches to them a 3-point sermon!
5. **First Point: False Assumptions:** *If you are pursuing God's work all will be peaceful, and without opposition, and ease.* (v. 2)
6. A *flawed assumption* we continually make –
- a) If you have a good marriage you never struggle or argue.
 - b) If your kids are truly converted (and if you're a good parent) they never do anything bad, never fall into sin, never get caught doing wrong.
 - c) If your church is doing ministry properly the people are always happy, lots of visitors are joining, and the money is good.
 - d) If you're doing what God called you to do for a career, then you'll be successful, the business will prosper and it will always be fun.
 - e) *Faith untempered by spiritual reality is naïve and foolish.*

7. Whenever we do *God's will* we will encounter difficulty, opposition, and a fair measure of failure. Jesus and Paul tell us that this will be so:

- a) *"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. I did not say these things to you from the beginning."*
"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."(John 16:1-4a, 33)
- b) *But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. (1 Cor. 16:8-9)*
- c) *But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. (2 Cor. 4:7-12)*
- d) *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (Eph. 6:10-13)*

8. **Second Point: False Priorities:** *Consider your ways and their results (vv. 3-6)*

- a) *Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. You 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. (Haggai 1:3-6)*
- b) The point: You found time to build your paneled houses but not the time to build God's house!
 - (1) Hebrew: *sapan*: ceiling, roof, panel
 - (2) i.e., the people built their own houses, put a roof on them and paneled the insides.
 - (3) But they left God's House w/o walls, roof or finishings or furniture.
- c) This was the **opposite** of King David's heart:

Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a

house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.” (2 Samuel 7:1-3)

- d) This is a matter of **priorities**: God’s house or my house first. Perhaps they might even be done simultaneously.
 - e) But you can’t take money, materials, time and efforts that rightly belong to God and use them on yourself until your life is comfortable.
9. **Illustration**: People often think (say), “I can’t afford to tithe!” The truth is, you can’t afford to steal from God; its dangerous to do so.

- a) When you take God’s portion and spend it on yourself you’re not providing for your needs; you’re robbing God of His due.
- b) **Malachi** explains this very plainly

“For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 3:6-12)

- c) If we use God’s tithes for ourselves we are *cursed with a curse* – financial, personal, family troubles.
- d) If we give God the full tithe, we will be rewarded.

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. (Mal. 3:10-11)

- e) Israel, in Haggai’s time was doing just that and the “*devourer*” was ruining their crops, economy, personal finances.

Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. You 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. (Haggai 1:5-6)

- f) **Fact**: Americans spend more on themselves than anyone else in the world, “tithe” less than 2% to their churches, and carry more personal debt than any people in the world. And our economy is in ruins! *Go figure!*

10. **Personally:** I have often thought of all the things I'd own and all the savings I'd have if I hadn't given my tithes, faith promises and building pledges to the church for over 40 years! But ... *I'm counting on the promise of Malachi 3:10 for Jane and my retirement.*

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. (Mal. 3:10)

11. **Third Point: False Expectations:** "Consider your ways" (#2) (vv. 7-11)

- a) *"Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. Go 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. You 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. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And 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." (Haggai 1:7-11)*

- b) They expected prosperity by means of their selfish use of finances.

You 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. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And 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." (Haggai 1:9-11)

- c) Haggai tells them: Get to work on God's house and then you can expect God's blessings

Go 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. (Haggai 1:8)

- d) This sounds an awful like Jesus Christ's view of work, money and financial prosperity –

- (1) *Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matt. 6:31-33)*
- (2) *And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:15, 32)*
- (3) *"One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate*

the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” (Luke 16:10-13)

- e) **Note:** This is *not* a matter of either/or, but rather a call for expectations in right proportion and correct timing.

(1) *For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. (Luke 12:30-31)*

(2) *give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you. (Luke 6:38)*

- f) BTW, God had warned them about this in *Leviticus 26:14-33*

“But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you. And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins, and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit. “Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins. And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted. “And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins. And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant. And if you gather within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. When I break your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven and shall dole out your bread again by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied. “But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me, then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. And I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and my soul will abhor you. And I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas. And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it. And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste. (Leviticus 26:14-33)

II. THE PEOPLE’S FIRST RESPONSE: OBEDIENCE (Haggai 1:12-15)

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 Lord. Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message, "I am with you, declares the Lord." And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, 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, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king. (Haggai 1:12-15)

Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah 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. 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. (Ezra 5:1-2)

1. The Holy Spirit "stirred up" the Spirit of Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua (Jeshua), as well as the "remnant of the people"
 - a) *And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, 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, (Haggai 1:14)*
 - b) *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 Lord. (Haggai 1:12)*
 - c) **Revival** was beginning to set in!
2. Haggai encouraged the people, as they began to respond to the Word of the Lord, "God is with you!"

Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message, "I am with you, declares the Lord." (Haggai 1:13)
3. And they began to work again on the house of the Lord on September 21, 520 B.C.
 - a) 23 days after Haggai's first sermon (message)
 - b) Why 23 days? Three reasons ...
 - (1) **First:** a revival spirit takes time to spread throughout a community
 - (2) **Second:** It took three weeks to call together, organize and equip the people for work.
 - (3) **Third:** The Sixth month (*Elul*) was a harvest month and the people were needed in both fields and orchards; God was more than willing to afford them such necessary time to harvest their crops before they set to work on the Temple again.
 - c) Work to rebuild the Temple commenced, after 16-17 year pause, and would be finished in about 3 years (516 BC). A total time span of over 20 years (537-516 BC).
4. **Key Lesson:** *It is never too late to obey God, and better to be 21 years late in doing God's will, then to never obey His commands.*

5. **James M. Boice:** *The Minor Prophets; 2:143*

It is one of the discouragements of the Christian ministry that so often a pastor will preach the Bible with as much power as he possesses and then be greeted with yawns by his parishioners as they go back to doing what they had been doing all along. Still, from time to time there is something quite different. The Word of God strikes home, and a life is genuinely changed. When that happens in large numbers you have a revival.

6. What accounts for the difference between a yawn, a violent reaction, or a spirit of renewed obedience?

Answer: *Three factors ...*

- a) **First:** An extraordinary work of the Spirit “*stirring up*” the hearts of the people. Main factor.
- b) **Second:** The circumstances of the people. Prosperity or War usually deaden the souls of men to the things of God. Crisis and personal need usually soften the hearts of men and women.
- c) **Third:** The general disposition of the people (church). If they are hardened to the Lord, then opposition will come. If they desire to please the Lord revival will follow.
- d) **James M. Boice** (vol. 2; p. 144)

They had been negligent of God’s work. They had invented flimsy excuses as to why they were inactive. But they were not basically hostile to God of His commandments as the people living before the Exile had been. They really wanted to please God. So when the word of the Lord came to them by Haggai, they recognized it as a true word of God and did what God commanded.

7. This was the first of 3 Revivals in the times of the Restoration.

Conclusion: Haggai’s preaching, and especially about the Temple, the Spirit of God and Governor Zerubbabel, are important for us.

1. His ministry has been referred to by some scholars (**VanGemeran**) as “*token and reality*”
2. He seems to focus on “tokens” (things) that point to a deeper reality; tokens of hope for the future.
3. One OT scholar called Haggai the *realist*, Zechariah the *idealist*, and Malachi the *Logician*. There is some truth to this, for each man’s prophecies are different. But all three are future oriented.
4. **Pieter A. Verhoef:** *Haggai and Malachi: NICOT; p. 8*

In spite of the short duration of his ministry and the fact that his book is the second smallest in the OT, he may be considered one of the great figures in Israel. In a time of deep decline and discouragement, his single-minded and ardent preaching again gave the people of God new perspectives on their relationship with God and on the promised blessings. In encouraging the people to rebuild the temple, Haggai gave them a new spiritual center, without which they would have perished as the people of God in the vortex of history.

5. Haggai said this to us: *Do not focus only on the “tokens” God gives you, but on the spiritual reality they point to.*
 - a) The Temple: The House of the Lord pointed to the future glory of the Kingdom of God.
 - b) The Holy Spirit: He was the new Presence of God not only among His people but soon to be in His people.

- c) Zerubbabel the Governor: He pointed to Jesus Christ, the New King of the New People of God.
 - d) Their Wealth: This pointed to God’s care for their lives but not to their security, peace or blessing.
 - e) Their Circumstances – good or bad: These were reminders of the Sovereignty of God and His fulfillment of the Covenant promises – either to bless or to curse – depending on our obedience to His Word and loyalty to His Covenant.
6. Haggai’s first sermon can be boiled down to this: *It’s not about you!* About your career, your home, your success, your ease and comfort, your marriage, family, children, your education and future, not even your well-being. It’s not about you! Its about God: God’s house (church), God’s family (the saints), God’s success (great commission), God’s pleasure in us and God’s glory among the nations!
- a) *“Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. Go 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. (Haggai 1:7-8)*
 - b) *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matt. 6:33)*
7. One book I’m using in my sermon preparation is an interesting little book titled *The Next to Last Word (Service, Hope and Revival in the Post-exilic Prophets)*, by **Michael P. V. Barrett**.
- a) OT Professor at the Puritan Reformed Seminary, Grand Rapids
 - b) Service: *Haggai*
 - c) Hope: *Zechariah*
 - d) Revival: *Malachi*
 - e) and yet all 3 emphases are in each of the 3 prophets.
8. In the conclusion to his section on Haggai 1:1-15, he compares preachers to airline attendants!
- a) *I’ve often thought that preachers and flight attendants have a lot in common. Prior to takeoff, flight attendants review and demonstrate various safety procedures designed to prevent injury and even to preserve life in cases of emergency. Notwithstanding how crucial the instructions, most passengers have no sense of urgency and rudely ignore the message by engaging in awkward conversations with next-seat strangers, by reading, by sleeping or just by being bored and inattentive. Similarly, preachers – with a far greater lifesaving message – experience the same kind of inattention. The unhappy fact is that few sermons are remembered beyond the moment of delivery, and even fewer beyond the church parking lot. Most churchgoers expect a lot from preachers – to give diligence to the pulpit ministry, to hold their attention – but only a few seem to get anything from them. Sadly, this kind of response to preaching has a long history.*
 - b) a pretty woman, nicely dressed, with a boring message of safety.
 - c) *“As for you, son of man, your people who talk together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to his brother, ‘Come, and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.’ And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as*

my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain. And behold, you are to them like one who sings lustful songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it. When this comes—and come it will! — then they will know that a prophet has been among them.” (Ezekiel 33:30-33)

9. I wonder: *When Americans go home after church on Sunday – if they go to church on Sunday – do they ever think: “There has been a prophet among us!”?*

10. And what are these Prophets doing? *Reminding you to pay attention to the “tokens” that point you to spiritual, eternal, God-centered reality!*

a) Church: The Household of God and preserver of God’s Truth.

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. (1 Tim. 3:14-15)

b) The Word of God (The Bible): God’s voice in our world today.

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21)

c) The Sacraments – Baptism and Lord’s Supper: means of grace to build you up in your faith.

d) Sunday School: The school of Christ to prepare you for heaven.

And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:32)

e) Tithing: Biblical Stewardship that breaks the power of greed, materialism and covetousness, and will be the basis for God’s rewarding of you.

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written,

“He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. (2 Cor. 9:6-10)

f) Worship: Dress rehearsal for heaven, by weaning us off this world and giving us a taste for God.

*Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!
Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints,
for those who fear him have no lack!
The young lions suffer want and hunger;*

but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. (Ps. 34:8-10)

11. Are there any “real” covenant prosecutors left in the world today? I think so. And so does Dr. Van Gemeren (p. 38)

Elijah is a significant individual in redemptive history. The Holy Spirit empowered him and gave him a concern for the spiritual condition of his people. Elijah longed for a people whose heart would be loyal to the Lord as he discerned the necessity of judgment and purification. His ministry is continuous with Moses and with all the prophets who served after him as “covenant prosecutors,” including the literary or classical prophets. The spirit of Elijah was with Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and with all the other prophets before, during, and after the Exile. He was with John the Baptist and the apostles, and he is still present with all who proclaim God’s Word faithfully.

12. Listen to the voice of your preacher, take seriously the sacred tokens of the faith, give your attention to the things of God.
13. Soon – very, very soon – we will leave this world and “fly” to the New World yet to come. Before we leave ...
14. *“May we have your attention please! If you will direct your attention to the preacher in the center aisle, at the front of the sanctuary, we have some important safety features we’d like to share with you ...”*