

A Bible Study on the Book of Haggai



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Haggai: Introduction

Author:

The name Haggai means "my feast" or "festival" in Hebrew, probably because he was born during a Israelite festival. Some suggest it can also mean "joyous one." He was a dynamic motivator and he is mentioned in **Ezra 5:1, 6:14**, and **Hebrews 12:6**. His appearance seems to take place several years after the return to Jerusalem at a time when the temple work ceased. He was the one bold enough to speak up for God! It is possible that Haggai was one of the elderly men who had actually seen Solomon's temple (**Haggai 2:3**).

Date:

It is believed that Haggai was written in 520 BC. If this is the appropriate date then we can specifically date the events of this book as follows: September 24, 520 BC (1:15), October 24, 520 BC (2:1), December 24, 520 BC (2:10, 2:18, 2:20). Though the date of the writing precedes that of Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah, the events describe things after those mentioned in the previous books. Remember that Isaiah had prophesied of a Babylonian captivity in 100 years (**Isaiah 6:9-12**) but gave them some hope by saying they would return (**Isaiah 6:13**). God even named the kings that would lead them back (**Isaiah 45:1-4**).

Theme:

Around 536 BC Cyprus released the Israelites to return to Jerusalem in order to restore the temple. God chose the time for this revival and guided them back home. The Lord also blessed them with a queen (Esther), a builder (Nehemiah), a priest (Ezra), and several prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). The people were awaiting the "new covenant" as prophesied by Joel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah. They were looking for the kingdom that would not perish (Daniel). For some reason the work on the temple had ceased (**Ezra 1-4**). It stopped for a total of 16 years! At this time the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were called to prophesy (Zechariah was about two months after Haggai and Zechariah's prophecy begins midway between Haggai's second and third messages). Haggai's message was one of motivation and inspiration. He was determined to get the people back to work. Haggai's role is to call the nation back to build. The prophet does not deal with social injustice, idolatry, or any other activity. He and Zechariah simply command them to get back to work (**Ezra 6**).

Audience:

The intended audience is the people of Judah that had returned from the Babylonian exile (about 50,000 Jews). They were given permission from the Persians to inhabit Jerusalem, rebuild the temple, and fortify the walls around the city, but it was delayed because of opposition (**Ezra 4**). Remember that it was King Artaxerxes himself that encouraged Ezra to reconstitute the temple worship (**Ezra 7:17**) and to make sure the law of Moses was being obeyed (**Ezra 7:25-26**).

Literary Notes:

Haggai, like other prophetic books, is written in prose, rather than poetry. His style is plain, direct, and pointed. It should be noted that he use the phrase "says the Lord," or similar wording, 36 times in 38 verses. With only two chapters and 38 verses it is the second shortest book in the Old Testament (Obadiah 21 verses). Four distinct messages are detailed and dated in this book (see above). Scholars love the fact that the writer makes his message and timing clear.

Key Verses:

Haggai 1:2, 1:5, 1:7, 1:14, 2:3-4, 2:6, 2:16

Contemporaries of the Prophet Haggai:

Leaders of the people of God included Ezra and Nehemiah who would have lived in this time. The prophets Zechariah and Malachi prophesied during this period.

Outline of the Book:

- I. A Call to Build (1:1-15)
- II. A Call to Behold (2:1-9)
- III. A Call to Behave (2:10-19)
- IV. A Call to Believe (2:20-30)

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Lesson 1: A Call To Build

Haggai 1:1-15

Introductory Thoughts

Why did the building on the temple stop? What does that tell us about our enemy?

After all those years in captivity, why don't they have courage and zeal?

What happens when the Lord's work starts to weaken and slow down?

I. The Command to Restore The House of God (vs.1-11)

How does the kingdom suffer when the people become apathetic and lazy?

The theme of Haggai is the rebuilding of the temple, who chose this theme?

Several years had passed since Zerubbabel had returned, where is the leadership?

Who was to blame for the temple not being finished?

How do you think God felt when He saw the foundation was overgrown with weeds?

Why did the people busy themselves with their own house building (**Esther 3**)?

The payment from the sale of the Jewish property that Haman promised to make to the government was \$3,840,000,000. What happened to that money?

II. The Command to Obey God's Will (vs.12-15)

Why does God demand being first?

When the Lord says "*I am with you*" (v.13), how do you think they felt about that?

Concluding Thoughts

Why is it important to know the enemy?

Why should we prepare for His attacks?

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Lesson 2: A Call To Behold, Behave, & Believe

Haggai 2:1-23

Introductory Thoughts

Why did the temple work slow in the four weeks between chapters?

How could they of avoided these pitfalls?

With the throne of David now gone, it was necessary for the nation to realize it's true center of activity in the temple. What happens if there is no temple?

I. The Call to Behold (vs.1-9)

Why does Haggai mention three temples: Solomon's (2:3), Zerubabbel's (2:3-5), and the Messiah's (2:6-9)?

What does this section tell us about attitude toward prophecy?

What can we learn from their "inaction" and how that might carry over into other areas of their lives?

How many weeks until they get started again?

Who were guilty parties for stopping the work this time (**Ezra 3:12**)?

Why are we often guilty of looking backward instead of forward?

What happens if we do not look toward the future?

The original temple work included 80K quarrymen, 70K porters, and 30K Israelites to cut and transport the wood, not including the other skilled craftsmen (**I Kings 5:15-38**). Could that even compare to this effort?

The gold in the first temple work is estimated to be worth \$760 billion and the silver was estimated to be worth \$384 billion. Would this discourage you?

How can looking to the Messiah and His kingdom help this effort?

II. The Call to Behave (vs.10-19)

Which group of people received the blunt of the third message? Why?

If the priests are called upon for renewed consecration, what can we assume about the lives of the common people?

Why is the leadership of this effort vital to its success?

Why is God more willing to bless than we are to receive His blessing?

Were their pitfalls self-inflicted? Why? Explain.

Why did the people need to repent and revive? Why were they defiled?

III. The Call to Believe (vs.20-30)

Previously he called them to action, courage, and patience, now it's about faith.

Why does Haggai call the people to faith?

What does our faith in God do for our spirit, attitude, and effort?

Why does he challenge them to look ahead instead of looking back?

What is the true "Golden Age," past, present, or future?

What benefits would they receive from the age of the Messiah and His church?

The New Testament reveals that Jesus would come to set the Jews and Gentiles free.

How does that message give these people hope?

Concluding Thoughts

How can you help the work of the Lord? How can you hinder the work of the Lord?

What talents do you have to contribute to the Lord's work?

What things will you remember the most about the book of Haggai?

What talents do you have to contribute to the Lord's work?