

“And I Will Fill this House with Glory!”

Haggai 2:1-23

Open Your Heart: In a moment of silent prayer ask God to give you a receptive heart to all the truths you will encounter in this study.

By way of review, the prophecy given to Haggai was composed of four messages which were all delivered in a brief period of time. Each message was a further step in the process of encouraging Zerubbabel and the faithful remnant to finish rebuilding the temple of God in Jerusalem. Begin by scanning last week's lesson.

1. What thoughts or images come to mind when you contemplate the glory of God within the setting of the temple?

Message 2—*God's Word of Support:* **Read** Haggai 2:1-9 from several translations.

Observation

2. How long after the remnant of Judah began to rebuild the temple did Haggai receive the second message from the LORD? (Compare Haggai 1:15 with 2:1.)
3. To whom was the second message from the LORD addressed? Include a reference.
4. How old would Haggai's associates be who had seen Solomon's Temple before it was destroyed in 586 B.C.?

We don't know how much the builders had accomplished at this point in reconstructing the temple, but evidently enough had been done to give the people a general idea of what the new temple would be like.

5. What do you think the people were wrestling with when you consider Haggai's poignant questions: *“Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?”*

Note: There is no way these relatively poor exiles could match the extravagance of Solomon's Temple with his professional craftsmen working with imported woods and huge quantities of gold.

Hence, in verses 4 and 5 words of support and encouragement pour forth from the LORD through the prophet Haggai. **Reread** and observe the significant sequence of phrases in these verses. You might want to mark them in your Bible.

6. On what basis did Haggai encourage the remnant to “Be strong. . .and work” (verse 4)?

7. From what facts were the people to take courage (verse 5)? (Also see Exodus 19:4-6.)

Undoubtedly the ruined temple had come to symbolize a ruined people. Fear gripped many of the remnant—fear that no amount of praying or piety could bring God to bless them again, fear that the whole endeavor was in vain—fear that their political enemies would in fact win. – Alden But the basis of their confidence and lack of fear was to be grounded in both *past* and *future* promises.

In words of grandeur, Haggai points them to promises of the future—promises made by none other than God Almighty!

8. From Haggai 2:6-9 write a summary of the exalted promises God says will be fulfilled “in a little while.” Also reflect on Hebrews 12:26; Isaiah 66:10-13 and Romans 5:2b (Amplified). Review the Guidelines for Interpreting Predictive Prophecy.

9. Take a few minutes to share how this magnificent passage has spoken to you. Did a particular verse make you think? Note your thoughts and questions below.

About two months later—“*On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month,*” Haggai received two more messages for the remnant. It had now been three months since work on the temple had resumed and still there was no fruit on the vine and no seed in the barn. The Jews were in danger of further discouragement.

Message 3—*God’s Word of Admonition and Blessing*: **Read** and ponder Haggai 2:10-19.

This third message given to Haggai is quite different from the other utterances from the prophet. Here Haggai conducts what we would call a panel discussion with the priests at Jerusalem. Through this unique method the prophet draws out a vital spiritual principle God wanted the remnant to hear. In our time, when the asking and answering of questions is popular on radio and television, we can relate to Haggai’s method.

10. Paraphrase in contemporary language the questions and the response from the priests.
Question 1 and the priests’ response: Verses 11-12

Question 2 and the priests’ response: Verse 13

As we consider these two questions together, we begin to see what the prophet was aiming at. Evil and wickedness are much more contagious than goodness. It is far easier to spread evil than virtue. Holiness is not catching, but uncleanness is.

Application

Haggai now applies this principle to the remnant. Contained in this dialogue is a profound observation of the holiness of God and its implications for the lives of the people. Carefully **reread** Haggai 2:14-19.

Consider also the years of failure by the people to put God first—years of devotion to selfish interests are not easily set aside. Even though the people had repented and were now rebuilding the temple, the consequences of their disobedience were still being felt.

11. In what way does the truth exposed by the priests explain why blessing was still being withheld from the remnant?

12. After three months Haggai was allowed to make a promise: “*From this day on I [God] will bless you.*” What do you think these blessings consisted of?

13. Within your group discuss what you can do to transfer the things you have learned from Haggai’s “third message” to your everyday life. *Keep in mind there are no “second generation” holy people. Each generation must establish its own relationship with the Holy God.*

Message 4—God’s Word of Promise: Thoughtfully **read** Haggai 2:20-23.

It was a notable day, that twenty-fourth of Chislev in the second year of King Darius. On that day Haggai brought his prophecy to a magnificent conclusion.

14. a. To whom was this prophetic message directed?

- b. In Haggai 1:1, 14; 2:2, 21 what was Zerubbabel’s title?

- c. What title is bestowed upon him in Haggai 2:23? (Compare with Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:7; 52:13-14 and 53:11.)

- d. With whom is Zerubbabel being compared in the Isaiah passages?

This last message of Haggai looks to the future when God promises to do two things—both of which will encourage and motivate the returned exiles to complete the temple.

15. What was Haggai to announce to Zerubbabel in verses 21 and 22? Consult the following verses for the full meaning of this promise: Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45; Zechariah 9:1-9 and Revelation 16:16-19.

16. The LORD also promised to make Zerubbabel like His _____ on “that day.”

What is the meaning of this unusual proclamation? By calling Zerubbabel His ‘servant’ and ‘chosen one’ (His signet ring), which represented royal authority, God was reinstating the Davidic line and renewing His covenant with David. As a descendant of David he was in the direct line of the ancestry of Jesus. Zerubbabel was, as it were, the visible guarantee of a glorious future for the house of David. As God’s signet ring Zerubbabel became a picture of the future Messiah, Jesus Christ. God would provide the victory promised in this final message of Haggai, not through Zerubbabel personally, but through one of his descendants, namely Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:21).

17. How have you been stimulated spiritually by Haggai’s closing prophecy?

Ezra 6:14-22 provides an appropriate footnote to our passage about the completion of a modest second temple (515 B.C.). As you **read** this passage enter into the mood and atmosphere of the event!

18. What is the most important lesson you will take away from this historic occasion in the life of the Jewish nation?

After the days of Zerubbabel and Haggai, the Jewish nation declined in spite of the brief revival under Nehemiah. The nation of Israel became a pawn in the struggles between Syria and Egypt as the political power moved westward into Europe. Judea became just a small province in the Roman Empire and the Jews became an obscure people for several centuries.

Then God sent His “Signet” into the world. He was born of a woman of the royal family of David. The circumstances of the royal family had been so reduced that one branch was represented by a peasant woman living in a despised town and its other branch was represented by an unknown carpenter. So the world did not acknowledge God’s “Signet.” His own people gave Him a cattle shed in which to be born and the world gave Him a cross on which to die. God’s “Signet” returned to heaven, but He will come back at the appointed time! And “in that day” He will impose all the authority of His mighty throne on this corrupt world—and righteousness and justice will finally prevail!

Let us rejoice and exult in our hope of experiencing and enjoying the glory of God forever—the visible presence of God Himself that will fill the whole earth!

Guidelines for Interpreting Predictive Prophecy

The following guidelines provide important parameters that will assist you in accurately handling the prophecies of the Bible. The goal of interpretation is to discover the originally intended meaning of a passage—the way the original audience understood it.

- When a prophet spoke for God, the prophecy could refer to the following:
 - a present or near fulfillment*
 - a future fulfillment*
 - a twofold fulfillment: a near fulfillment and then a later, future fulfillment*
- As you study prophecy, it is important to remember that the prophets did not always indicate intervals of time between events. For example, an Old Testament prophecy could include the first and second comings of Christ without any indication of the time span between them.
- When reading the prophecies of the Bible, keep in mind that the message is centered primarily on five prophetic points in history.
 1. *The Prophet's own time*
 2. *Captivity and restoration*
 3. *The first coming of Christ*
 4. *The second-coming of Christ*
 5. *The new heavens and the new earth*
- Always approach a prophecy as literal (in its usual, ordinary meaning) unless one of the following occurs:
 - the grammatical context shows that it is figurative language by the use of similes, metaphors, parables, allegories, symbols, or types.
 - a literal interpretation violates common sense, is contrary to what the author is saying, or is contrary to what the rest of Scripture teaches.
- When a prophetic passage cannot be taken literally, look for what the author is trying to convey through his figurative or symbolic language. To discern what the author is saying, look for answers in the following places:
 - within the context of the book in which the passage appears
 - in any other writings of that author
 - in any other prophetic writings to which the author had access (for example, other prophetic books or passages in the Word of God).
- Remember, often when a prophet refers to future events, he does not use the future tense.

(Compiled from The New International Inductive Study Bible)