

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH-Red Bud, Illinois

Adult Bible Class

Haggai: "Build God's House!"

Haggai, Chapter One (continued):

v. 5: "Lord Almighty" This is the second time Haggai uses this name for God. He uses it 13 times in this short book. All people, even Gentile rulers, are subject to the God whom Haggai represents.

"Give careful thought" This is the first of five times that Haggai uses this phrase. In our sinful nature we often do without really thinking about what we are doing. As people who belong to an eternal God, we are to take time before we act, watch what we do, evaluate after we do it and then re-evaluate later.

v. 6: What frustrations were the people experiencing? _____

Why could they not be satisfied? _____

"The more we work for ourselves, the less we will have; the more we work for God, the more we will have."

(Think of Jesus' parable of the Rich Fool in Luke 12:15-21.)

This verse may be evidence of a change in the economy where a monetary system involving coins is replacing a barter economy where items were exchanged. What is the economic term when it takes more money to buy less stuff? _____

vv. 7-8: What is God's solution to the people's problem? _____

The mountains refer to Lebanon in the north. This is where Solomon got timber for the temple he built (1 Kings 5:6).

Why would the God of all the universe take pleasure in a building? _____

(It does not have to be a large, fancy and expensive cathedral. Any place that is built for the glory of God with the sacrificial love of His people honors Him.)

v. 9: Here we see a direct cause and effect relationship between the bad behavior of God's people and the trouble that they are suffering. What had happened to the people? _____

Why had it happened to them? _____

The Curses of Deuteronomy 28:

¹⁵ However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all His commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: ³⁶ The LORD will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your fathers. There you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone. ³⁷ You will become a thing of horror and an object of scorn and ridicule to all the nations where the LORD will drive you. ³⁸ You will sow much seed in the field but you will harvest little, because locusts will devour it. ³⁹ You will plant vineyards and cultivate them but you will not drink the wine or gather the grapes, because worms will eat them. ⁴⁰ You will have olive trees throughout your country but you will not use the oil, because the olives will drop off. ⁴¹ You will have sons and daughters but you will not keep them, because they will go into captivity. ⁴² Swarms of locusts will take over all your trees and the crops of your land.

⁴⁵ All these curses will come upon you. They will pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the LORD your God and observe the commands and decrees He gave you. ⁴⁶ They will be a sign and a wonder to you and your descendants forever. ⁴⁷ Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, ⁴⁸ therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the LORD sends against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you.

vv. 10-11: "because of you" In fulfillment of these prophesied curses of Deuteronomy 28, even though the problems the people are experiencing are God's doing (v. 11), they are happening because of the unfaithful actions of the people. Because the people refused to honor God, He is going "on strike" against them.

“dew” In a dry environment like Israel has, at least the dew of the morning helps the crops grow.

v. 12: “remnant” This word means a small portion left over from a much larger piece or group. Those who had returned to Jerusalem and Judah from their exile in Babylon were a small group compared to the previous population of this area. This remnant has been spared by the mercy of God. It is from this small group that God’s promise Messiah, the Savior of the world, would come.

Why did the people obey what Haggai said?

In the history of God’s Old Testament people, we see that when their leaders obeyed God and led the people in serving Him, the nation prospered.

What does it mean that “the people feared the Lord.”

This is a faith, not a terror, word. The fear of the Lord is the inward trust that a believer has. To “obey” is the outward response in words and works that flows from that inward faith. Faith and works go together as twin partners, two sides of the same coin, in a life empowered by the Holy Spirit.

v. 13: What is God’s promise here?

This is a promise God makes to His servants throughout the Old Testament (e.g. Jacob in his vision at Bethel in Genesis 28). That God is with His people is a sure indication of their protection and success.

Why is this promise important for God’s people to know?

v. 14: Who gets involved in the rebuilding of the temple?

The people heard Haggai’s sermon and they responded to these words of God. We saw in Ezra 5:2 that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah pitched in and helped with the rebuilding of the temple. They did not just speak, they acted and worked. The other side of that is seen here. The work of God’s church is not done just by the preachers of the Word. The people who hear that Word also are to pitch in and do the work.

v. 15: The date is September 21, 520 BC. It is just 23 days after Haggai first had spoken God’s Word to them.

Haggai, Chapter Two:

v. 1: This is the second revelation for preaching that God gives to Haggai. The date is now October 17. This would have been the last day of the Festival of Booths (Tabernacles). This celebration recalled God’s deliverance of His people from their slavery in Egypt (Leviticus 23:33-43). The people’s ears would have been receptive to the prophet’s reference to Egypt in verse 5. This also was the fall festival that celebrated the harvest of the summer crop, even if they were struggling with a meager harvest. The last day of this feast is when Solomon dedicated the first temple (1 Kings 8:2).

vv. 2-3: Reality sets in. Even with the help of the Persian government’s stimulus money this temple would not be as magnificent as the first temple which Solomon had built. The older people who could remember that building from their youth (including Haggai?), but are now in their seventies plus, are discouraged by this temple’s small size (Ezra 3:12).

vv. 4-5a “now” God’s people are not to dwell on the past for God is present with us in the present. While history is a great study, too much of a focus on the past means that we are not doing much in the present. “be strong” God said this to the more famous Joshua as he prepared to lead the Israelites into the promised land of Canaan after Moses’ death (Joshua 1:5-6).

This is the first promise of God in this chapter (a repetition of 1:13) backed up by what God had done for His people in bringing them out of Egypt.

v. 5b: This second promise of God intensifies the first one. “My Spirit remains among you.” The active and faith-creating presence of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity is a continuous gift to God’s people.