

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

Adult Bible Class

Haggai: "Build God's House!"

Haggai, Chapter Two (continued):

vv. 6-7: Now begins the third and most important of the Lord Almighty's three promises. As He did to Egypt with the ten plagues, soon (in His time) He will do again with all the nations ("Gentiles"). From them God's people will come to His temple.

Who is "the desired of all the nations?" _____

The temple or house to which the nations will come is not a building in Jerusalem but the Christian church which God's Son has established in the world by His life, death and resurrection. The author of Hebrews quotes this passage to teach us that God's shaking of all the kingdoms of the world is not done.

Hebrews 12:26-29 ²⁶At that time (the Israelites at Mt. Sinai) His voice shook the earth, but now He has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens. ²⁷The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, ²⁹for our "God is a consuming fire."

vv. 8-9: The Lord Almighty lays claim to all that the nations of the earth value. None of what we have really belongs to us. It is God's that He allows us to use as stewards or managers of His blessings.

We have seen that the older people who had been around during the time of Solomon's temple cried when they saw the small size of the new temple that was going to be built (Ezra 3:12 and Haggai 2:3). But the Lord Almighty says that the glory of this second temple will be greater than the glory of the first temple. **Why is this?** _____

The glory of a church is not in the magnificence of the structure or the expense of its furnishings. The glory is the presence of Christ as His people gather for worship to hear His Word. The "peace" that the Lord Almighty grants us is more than the absence of fighting. It is a restored relationship of wholeness, righteousness, soundness and completeness. We have this peace through the work of God's Son for us.

John 20:19-23 ¹⁹On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰After He said this, He showed them His hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you." ²²And with that He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

vv. 10-11: This is the third word of the Lord to Haggai. The date is now Dec. 18, 520. A month before this time the prophet Zechariah began his ministry among the returned exiles of Judah.

The Greek philosopher Socrates was known for his method of asking questions to come to a better understanding of the truth (which drove the people around him so crazy that they put him to death). Here the Lord Almighty tells Haggai to ask the priests a question about ritual law.

vv. 12-14: What is ceremonially holy does not make something else holy by indirect contact. However, what is ceremonially unclean passes that uncleanness on to whatever it touches. This had happened with the sin of Achan who kept some of the spoils for himself in the defeat of Jericho. His sin made the whole people corrupt in God's sight ("one bad apple spoils the _____").

Because the people Haggai addresses are unclean in God's sight through their lack of faith, their uncleanness infects all that they undertake, even the offering of their sacrifices.

Christian parents should be concerned about this as their faithful children get serious about relationships with unbelievers or non-practicing Christians. It happens more often that the less-faithful partner brings down the more-faithful one than that the more-faithful one improves the faith life of the less-faithful one.

vv. 15-17: Once again with the phrase “give careful thought” Haggai brings to the attention of the people what had happened to them as God’s punishment for them not building a house for Him and instead focusing on their own houses (see 1:9). They suffered from scarcity, blight, mildew, and hail.

vv. 18-19: Again using the phrase “give careful thought” twice Haggai brings the people into the present and points them to their future under the Lord’s blessing.

We should not put off until tomorrow what can be done today (very true also in a spiritual sense).

“The road to _____ is paved with _____ intentions”

“I will go to church again once I am married or once we have children.”

“I will get involved in a Bible study group once the kids are grown and gone.”

“I will put more money in the offering once I get that promotion at work.”

“I will volunteer for an elected position in the congregation once I retire from my job.”

There is no seed left in the barn because it all has been planted. There is fruit yet to be borne by these various trees. There is hope for a future harvest. God is working among us. His Spirit is stirring our hearts. The Word of God works in the world and in our lives. People are reborn as children of God with a new spirit and a new life instilled in our hearts.

vv. 20-21: This is the fourth and last word of the Lord to the prophet Haggai. It also takes place on Dec. 18. But instead of it being a sermon for the whole congregation, it is a message directed only to their leader, the governor Zerubbabel. This repeats what God said back in verse 7 about shaking the heavens and the earth.

v. 22: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” asks Paul in Romans 8. “In God We Trust” is to be more than a slogan stamped on our coins and printed on our currency. It is to be emblazoned on our lives. What a great protection for a people when they and their leaders are faithful to the almighty God!

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

v. 23: Zerubbabel was in the line of King David, the kings of Judah. His name appears in the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew 1:12 and Luke 3:27. While not a king of God’s people in human eyes, the Lord Almighty calls him, “My servant.” The Lord promises to make Zerubbabel “like My signet ring.” This was a king’s prized and jealously guarded possession. With it the king impressed his seal on important documents and marked them as being his official business. This reverses the curse that God had placed on Zerubbabel’s grandfather King Jehoiachin who went into exile in Babylon in 597 BC: “As surely as I live,” declares the Lord, “even if you, Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, were a signet ring on My right hand, I would still pull you off” (Jeremiah 22:24).

While Zerubbabel is not otherwise memorable in Biblical or secular history, his role as an ancestor and image of the coming Messiah makes him important for God’s people at his time. The prophecies of Haggai do not find their fulfillment in an earthly ruler but in a spiritual Savior whose kingdom is not of this world and who has won the war against the forces of evil in this world for us.

The Immediate Result of Haggai’s Ministry:

Ezra 6:14-15¹⁴ So the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia.¹⁵ The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.