

Minor Prophets: HAGGAI

INTRODUCTION

The book of Haggai records four sermons preached by Haggai the prophet to the people of Israel in 520 BC, almost twenty years after they returned home from exile in Babylon. The purpose of Haggai's sermons was to encourage Israel to walk with the Lord by rebuilding the temple and worshiping in purity. Understanding the significance of the temple is essential for understanding the message of Haggai. The temple was not only significant because it symbolized the covenant with God and the Lord's presence, but it was also the focal point of communal worship, sacrifice, and national identity. Thus, the temple was a physical manifestation of Israel's relationship with God. Unfortunately, the temple was destroyed when Israel was taken captive. Although Israel attempted to rebuild it when they returned home, they gave up in the face of adversity and settled for a life of comfort and ease. It is against this backdrop that Haggai receives the Word of the Lord. His sermons forced Israel to confront its spiritual indifference and renew its spiritual commitment so that the people could once again receive the Lord's blessing. In essence, Haggai's sermons challenged Israel to abandon its spiritual failures and return to the Lord in obedience to rebuild the temple and properly worship God.

Haggai's theology teaches us about God's sovereignty, God's word, holiness, human responsibility, and what our appropriate response should be to each one of these topics. First, God's sovereignty is affirmed by Haggai's call for Israel to fully submit to the Lord who is in control of everything. The appropriate response to God's sovereignty is our submission. Second, the power of God's word through Haggai enabled Israel to abandon their selfishness and serve the Lord. The appropriate response to God's word is our obedience. Third, the importance for Israel to be holy comes from the Lord's holiness. The appropriate response to God's holiness is our own holiness. Lastly, Haggai's urgent call for Israel to change was rooted in their own responsibility to serve the Lord. The appropriate response to human responsibility is our choice to serve the Lord. Thus, we can see how Haggai's theology informs us about how we should live today considering God's sovereignty, the power of his Word, the importance of holiness, and the reality of human responsibility.

BOOK ORGANIZATION

4 Messages— "The word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet . . ."

1. Get Busy: Rebuild my temple (Hag 1:1-15)
2. Be Encouraged: The best is yet to come (Hag 2:1-9)
3. Be Blessed: I will bless you (Hag 2:10-19)
4. Be Hopeful: The Messiah will come through Zerubbabel (Hag 2:20-23)

JESUS IN THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

The book of Haggai points to Jesus in many ways. First, the reference to the temple points to Jesus as the true temple and the ultimate dwelling place of God (Hag 2:7-9). Second, Haggai's mission to restore the temple and thus restore Israel's relationship with God and proper worship was fulfilled by Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. Third, Haggai's mention of the "desire of all nations," was fulfilled by Jesus who brings all people to God (Hag 2:8). Finally, the governor Zerubbabel is

connected to the promise of the everlasting Davidic Kingdom which is ultimately fulfilled by Jesus Christ (Hag 2:23).

BIBLE STUDY SPECIFICS: HOW TO APPROACH THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

OBSERVATION

- Identify the author (Whenever explicitly stated)
- Note any contextual information given in the heading
- What is the organization of Haggai, if anything is noticeable?
 - What literary devices are used?
 - What is the author emphasizing, contrasting, bringing attention to, and what is being repeated?

INTERPRETATION

How to interpret this Book: (include these categories)

- Literary context: How do you read your passage considering the given genre: Insert Type of Book Here Literature (What is the significance of the literary devices used? What do they teach or emphasize?)
- Narrative context: Who is the author(s), who is the original audience, what was the intended message, and where/how does this book fit into the overarching narrative of scripture? How does the author want the reader to respond?
- Historical context: What was happening at this point in history?
- Cultural context: What customs, practices, actions, and attitudes were common then?

APPLICATION

- Read in light of Christ.
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a sin to repent from?
- Is there a promise to cling to?
- Is there an example to follow? Or one to avoid?

PRAYER

Reflect and pray on these areas in response to Haggai:

- What areas have you neglected God's house while focusing on your own comfort?
- Pray for the glory of the Lord to radiate from your life to those around you.
- Evaluate your life and repent of sin you may be harboring.

CHURCH HISTORY: WHAT HAS CHURCH HISTORY SAID ABOUT THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

"For they had in their hands a sword; where they would they brandished it, handled it, smote with it: and all this was in the power of the preachers. For if the Word be not in their hands, why is it written, 'The Word of the Lord was put in the hand of the Prophet Haggai'? Surely, brethren, God set not His Word in His fingers. What is meant by, 'was put in his hand'? It was put into his power to preach the Word of the Lord. Lastly, we can understand these 'hands' in another way also. For they who spake had the word of God in their tongues, they who wrote, in their hands."

– Augustine of Hippo

“The first [the book of Haggai] condemned the sloth of the people; for, being intent on their own advantages, they all neglected the building of the Temple; and he shows that they were deservedly suffering punishment for their ingratitude; for they despised God their Deliverer, or at least honored him less than they ought to have done, and deprived him of the worship due to him. He then encouraged them to hope for a complete restoration, and showed that there was no reason for them to be disheartened by difficulties, and that though they were surrounded by enemies, and had to bear many evils, and were terrified by threatening edicts, they ought yet to have entertained hope; for the Lord would perform the work which he had begun—to restore their ancient dignity to his people, and Christ also would at length come to secure the perfect happiness and glory of the Church.”

– John Calvin

“Haggai foretold that Christ should be of Zerubbabel’s legal posterity. This seems to be the last and most particular revelation of the descent of Christ, till the angel Gabriel was sent to reveal it to his mother Mary.”

– Johnathan Edwards

