

SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: HAGGAI

The Historical Background

The Temple built by King Solomon was destroyed in 586BC when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and most of the Jews went into exile. In 539/538 BC, the first return from the Exile took place under Zerubbabel. Soon after their return, the Temple foundation was laid. However, due to oppositions, the work stopped and it remained stopped because of their self-centeredness. The situation lasted for close to 16 years, until 520 BC when God raised up Haggai to stir them up to resume this work. The spiritual state of the Jews then could be described as one of indifference – “I couldn’t care less!”

Note that Haggai’s prophecy took place before the events of Esther, Ezra Chapter 7 onwards and Nehemiah.

The Book Haggai

This book contains 4 messages from the prophet Haggai:

1:1-15 ~ Don’t Delay Anymore!

Date: *2nd year of Darius (520 BC), 6th month, 1st day*

Details: *The people know that they need to do it, but somehow keep delaying it, saying “Not now!” So the Temple Rebuilding Project remains unfinished, while their Home Improvement Projects proceeds. So the call here is to sort out their priorities, and know that God is displeased with how they are living their lives now!*

The people did respond to the message, and re-started the work on the 24th day of the 6th month. (1:12-15)

2:1-9 ~ Don’t Be Discouraged

Date: *520 BC, 7th month, 21st day*

Details: *The work has gone on for about 1 month, and the people are getting discouraged. So here the message is to encourage them to press on, telling them that God is going to cause the treasures of the kingdoms to be brought to this Temple, and more importantly, the glory of this Temple will be greater than the one built by Solomon!*

2:10-19 ~ I Will Bless You

Date: *520 BC, 9th month, 24th day*

Details: *A principle is stated: When we are defile, we will defile others. When we are clean, we do not pass on our cleanness. Message is that this people were defiled, and they just keep defiling others. But from that day onwards (2:19), there is going to be a change. From that day onwards, God will be blessing them.*

2:20-23 ~ I Have Chosen You

Date: *520 BC, 9th month, 24th day*

Details: *God has chosen Zerubbabel. All the kingdoms of the world will be overthrow, and Zerubbabel will remain and reign forever and ever!*

This message about Zerubbabel is a prophecy, not about Zerubbabel personally, but about the person Zerubbabel represents. Zerubbabel is a type as well as the ancestor of Jesus Christ, and this word is basically a prophecy about the reign and everlasting kingdom of Christ.

Message to the Jews then: *Rise up and do the work of God. He will be with us and bless us, as we obey. What we do has meaning and purpose. The Temple will*

be glorious and God's King will come and reign!

Message to the Christians today:

Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

John 2:19-21

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1 Corinthians 3:16

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19-22

The Temple in the New Testament is Jesus and the people of Jesus. Hence the message is to get up and work for Jesus, for the kingdom of Jesus. Don't be discouraged, and don't live indifferent, indulgent lives. What we do for Jesus has meaning and purpose, and the day will come when we will visibly see Christ reigning, and we with Him!