

Lessons from Haggai

(In compiling these notes I have drawn heavily from *The Minor Prophets* by James M. Boice)

There are five biblical books to read together in studying this period of the Restoration: the prophets of the Restoration (*Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, and the historical books (*Ezra, Nehemiah*). Haggai and Zechariah were early in the period, with Zechariah beginning his work two months after Haggai. Malachi came approximately one hundred years later, in a period of decline.

The people to whom Haggai was prophesying were not the disobedient rebels that other prophets had prophesied against. It is true that their spiritual priorities were not right. They had been hindered in their rebuilding of the temple and had lost their zeal for that work. They had turned to their legitimate secular affairs and had lost their vision for the very reason they had returned from captivity-to rebuild the temple. When Cyrus had died the enemies of the Jews had persuaded Ahasureus to stop the Jews from rebuilding the temple.

We must remember, however, that these approximately 50, 00 Jews, who composed the Remnant, had been willing to leave the relative ease and luxury of Babylon and make the long, dangerous journey to Jerusalem which was a desolate, impoverished place. So they were the **right people**, those especially dedicated to the Lord's work.

They were also in the **right place**. In those days the designated place of sacrifice was the temple. In our day there is not a designated location for worship, but there is a designated institution, the New Testament church. See John 4: 23, 24; Eph. 2: 19-22; 1 Tim. 3: 15.

They were engaged in the **right work** (rebuilding the temple; see Isaiah 58: 12) for the **right reasons** (to please and glorify God). According to Philip Mauro, "There was nothing to attract them to that land and to that city except the fact that it was God's holy land, and the city which he had chosen to put his name there."

However:

The years had gone by and they had let the work slide. They had lost their vision. The temple had not been rebuilt. They had been caught up in their secular pursuits.

Let us often ask ourselves the question: "What am I doing to fulfill the purpose for which I have been set apart by Jesus Christ?"

The Lord's message to them and to us is to **"consider!"** This word is used 5 times (1: 5, 7; 2: 15, 18).

They had plenty of time and money for themselves, but none for God. (See Matt. 6: 33; 22: 37).

1: 6-11-We have here a picture of the feverish but ineffective activity of our own inflation-cursed age. Many are frustrated and dissatisfied. Do we often have a sense of longing for "what is not there?"

The solution is in 1: 8-Put spiritual matters first and get on with serving God to the best of our abilities.

1: 12-15-The leaders and people were obedient to God when Haggai brought the Word of the Lord to them.

1: 15-An actual date is mentioned here when they began to build. Is there a day in your life when you will consciously put God first?

2: 1-3-We can become discouraged when we think that our work is not important. (See Ezra 3: 11-13). This can take several forms:

We compare our times with those of the past, such as the apostolic age, the Protestant Reformation, the

2

Great Awakening or other times of revival.

We compare ourselves with some other contemporary church which seems to be doing much better than we are.

We compare our self with some other individual who seems to be doing much better than we are.

We find God's answer in 2: 4. God has often exhorted His people to be strong. As we examine the following instances of this we must notice that the basis of their being strong was because God **promised to be with them!**

Notice the following instances:

Moses' charge- Deut. 31: 6.

God's charge to Joshua-Josh. 1: 6, 7, 9, 18.

David's charge to Solomom-1 Chron. 28: 20.

Paul's charge to the Ephesians- Eph. 6: 10.

The prophet also encouraged them by **appealing to the future**. We must remember that "History" is "His Story!" The glory of the latter temple would greatly surpass the glory of Solomon's Temple. (2: 7, 9).

God promised to "shake all nations." This likely had a **near and a far fulfillment**. God controls history. He ultimately overthrew the Babylonian, Persian, and Greek empires and established the Roman Empire. He was working His will in all of this. For the brief time that the Greek Empire lasted, Alexander the Great spread the Greek language, into which the New Testament would be given all over the Mediterranean world. Even with all the bad things about the Roman Empire the Romans established the Pax Romana (the peace of Rome) which made it possible for the gospel to be rapidly spread during the early days of the New Testament Church.

However, the **far and ultimate fulfillment** of the "shaking of the nations" will occur at the end of time when only the eternal things of God will remain. See Heb. 12: 26, 27; 2 Cor. 4: 18.

In a very interesting passage God is letting the people know that while holiness is not a readily communicable virtue, contamination is. It is far easier to spread evil than virtue. See 2: 12-14.

In 2: 15-19 the Lord is telling the people that there are blessings in obedience and lack of blessings in disobedience. This is reminiscent of Heb. 11: 6.

The prophecy of the "**desire of nations**" (2: 7) and the promises made to Zerubbabel (2: 23) are ultimately **Messianic**.