

Synopsis of Haggai

The general design of this book is to reprove the Jews for their negligence in building the temple, after they had liberty granted them by Cyrus to do it, and to encourage them in this work; which he does by the promise of the Messiah, who should come into it, and give it a greater glory than the first temple had.-John Gill

The first step, after the return from the Babylonian Captivity, was for the Jewish remnant to rebuild the Temple.

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were prophets who belonged to the period after the Return from Captivity. This period is told about in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

State of Affairs

Judea had been conquered, Jerusalem had been burned, and the Temple had been destroyed. The people had been carried away to Babylon (606-586 B. C.). This is discussed in 2 Kings 24, 25. After 70 years of the Captivity, about 50,000 Jews, by the edict to king Cyrus, returned to the land (536 B. C.) and began to rebuild the Temple. Shortly after they had begun the work was stopped because their enemies misrepresented what they were doing and Artaxerxes, who succeeded Cyrus, caused them to cease to build the Temple.

Nothing further was done for approximately 15 years. Then Darius came to the Persian throne and he was kindly disposed to the Jews. Under the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah the work was resumed and the Temple was completed in four years (520-516 B. C.). The wall of Jerusalem was built about 70 years later under the leadership of Nehemiah.

The Message of the Book

Even though times were hard and the Temple had not been rebuilt the people had found ways to build fine houses for themselves.

1: 1-5 There is a call for them to face their sinful neglect. They were discouraged and making excuses. They were saying “the time is not come” to build the Lord’s house.

We can learn much from these Jews. We can become paralyzed and believe that our efforts to serve God do not amount to much, and that it is no use to be enthusiastic about serving Him because the times are so bad. We can say to ourselves, “There is no use in hoping for a revival of Christianity in our day. Things are just going to go from bad to worse until Christ returns. We know that God is sovereign and that if He wants to move us, He will.”

This is a mistake. We must agonize in prayer and put forth our best effort according to the revealed will of God and not try to hide behind \His sovereign secret will.

1: 7-11 This is a declaration of God’s judgment. Their economic stress, drought, unemployment, and other troubles were directly traceable to their neglect in building the temple.

1: 12-15 The peoples’ response was good. The rulers fell into line first, Haggai gave a word of

encouragement from the Lord, and the people gladly responded.

2: 1-1 Prediction of the Temple.

2: 10-19 Promise of Present Blessing.

2: 20-22-The Shaking of the Nations.

2: 23-The Promised Ruler.

“This is distinctly a Messianic vision. Haggai’s mind was on that Temple, which he was helping Zerubbabel to build. But his words were God’s words; and God’s mind, in a sense deeper perhaps than even Haggai himself realized, was on Another Temple, yet to be, of which Solomon’s Temple and Zerubbabel’s Temple were but dim pictures: the Church, built not of stones, but of Souls of the Redeemed.” (*Halley’s Bible Handbook*).

There are **four prophetic messages** delivered by Haggai. They are introduced by the expression “the word of the Lord.”

Outline of Haggai

(From the *New Geneva Study Bible*)

- I. The First Message: A Call to Rebuild the Temple (ch. 1)
 1. The People’s Indifference and Poverty (1: 1-11)
 2. The People’s Response: Repentance (1: 12-15)
- II. The Second Message: God’s Greater Temple and Blessings (2: 1-9)
 1. Encouragement from God’s Presence (2: 1-5)
 2. Encouragement from God’s Promise of Blessing (2: 6-9)
- III. The Third Message: God’s Blessing for a Defiled People (2: 10-19)
 1. The Cause of Their Defilement (2: 10-14)
 2. The Results of Their Defilement: Covenant Curses (2: 15-17)
 3. God’s Determination to Bless Them (2: 18, 19)
- IV. The Fourth Message: God’s Victory for His People (2: 20-23)
 1. God’s Overthrow of the Nations (2: 20-22)
 2. The Enthronement of God’s Ruler (2: 23)