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Biblica Study Notes

Haggai 1:1-11

Many Jews returned from Babylon to Judah. They were supposed to build another temple in Jerusalem.

First they rebuilt their homes. Then they started farming again. But there wasn't enough rain. Their crops didn't produce enough food. Haggai explained why. Not having enough rain or food were sometimes signs of God's judgement. They were part of the covenant curses.

In Haggai's time God allowed these covenant curses to come to the Jews. Covenant curses came when God's people were not faithful to the Mount Sinai covenant. In the prophet Hosea's messages God had talked about ending the Mount Sinai covenant (Hosea 1:9).

Many Jews thought that God ended the covenant when he sent them into exile. But God had promised that he would continue the covenant. He would continue it with the people left alive after the time of exile. Many prophets had announced this.

God still wanted the Jews to live faithful to the Mount Sinai covenant after the exile. This meant that they would live the way God taught them to live. They would treat others according to God's rules. And they would worship God the way he taught them to in the Law of Moses. Because the Jews weren't doing these things, the covenant curses had come. The Jews needed to change their ways and to obey God. They needed to rebuild the temple. This would show that they had respect for God. It would show that they believed he is the Lord who rules over all.

Haggai 1:12-15

In the year 539 BC, Cyrus had ordered the Jews to rebuild the temple.

In 536 BC Joshua and Zerubbabel led the people to rebuild the temple. But other people groups living around them forced them to stop building. Government officials also forced them to stop for around 16 years. This story is recorded in the book of Ezra chapters 1 through 4.

Rebuilding the temple was something that Daniel had prayed about (Daniel 9:17-19). Daniel

understood that the temple was a sign of God's honour. God didn't need a temple built by human beings. Solomon had made that clear when the first temple was built (1 Kings 8:27). And people didn't need a temple in order to worship God. The stories of Daniel and Ezekiel made that clear. Daniel and Ezekiel served God faithfully in Babylon after the temple was destroyed.

But God chose to use the temple as a sign of his presence with people on earth. It was a sign that God wanted all people to worship him and obey him (Isaiah 2:1-5). Zerubbabel and Joshua listened to Haggai's message in the second year that Darius was king. These leaders obeyed God. They continued rebuilding the temple. So did all the people. Those were the people left alive after the southern kingdom's time of judgement. They were able to do this because God was with them. This meant that the people could trust that God was present with them. It also meant that God was taking action to help them. God stirred up their spirits. This meant that God gave them the desire and the ability to do the work. The story about continuing to rebuild the temple is recorded in Ezra chapters 5 and 6.

Haggai 2:1-9

The temple built when Solomon was king was grand and wonderful (1 Chronicles 29:1).

The second temple wasn't as beautiful. And the workers building it faced trouble. Certain Persian officials tried to stop their work. The story about this is recorded in Ezra chapter 5.

Haggai spoke a message of hope to encourage Zerubbabel, Joshua and the people. They didn't have to be afraid. They could be strong because God's Spirit was with them. This is another name for the Holy Spirit. The Spirit had been with the Israelites (Israel) when they left Egypt. At that time God had done many miracles to save them from being slaves. He promised to do mighty acts for his people once again. That is what it meant that he would shake the heavens and the earth. God would take action to make it possible for the Jews to finish building the temple.

Darius was God's tool to get this done. An important letter from Darius is recorded in Ezra chapter 6. It showed that Darius allowed the Jews

to continue building the temple. He made sure that they had all the supplies they needed.

Haggai prophesied about glory, beauty and peace in the temple. Some of these prophecies were fulfilled during the time of Herod the Great. His building projects made the second temple large and wonderful (Mark 13:1). Jews came to understand that the prophecies were about a time in the future. They would be fulfilled in the new creation.

Haggai 2:10-19

Haggai's third message was about the hearts of the people rebuilding the temple. God warned that they were making the second temple unclean. This was because the people themselves were unclean.

This didn't mean that they needed to wash dirt off their bodies. It meant that they weren't living according to the ways God had taught them. God's people were considered unclean when they didn't live according to the Law of Moses.

God invited them to think carefully. God wanted his people to pay attention to their thoughts, words and actions. He wanted them to turn away from evil and to repent of their sin.

God wanted them to love him and obey him with all of their heart (Deuteronomy 6:5). When God's people did this, they were considered clean. It meant that they were being faithful to the Mount Sinai covenant. This made them able to receive the covenant blessings.

Haggai 2:20-23

Haggai's fourth message was a message of hope for Zerubbabel. It showed that God has power over all human governments. God rules over all. Many kingdoms are led by human beings who don't recognise this. God promised to bring judgement against them and to destroy them.

But God promised something very different to Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was God's servant. God chose him. Zerubbabel was like a ring with God's royal mark on it. The royal mark was a seal. It showed that Zerubbabel had authority from God to be a ruler.

These promises were about God's covenant with David. They showed that God continued his covenant with David through Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel never became king over Judah or Israel. Neither did anyone in his family line.

Jews came to understand that Haggai's message was a prophecy about the messiah. New Testament writers understood that it was a prophecy about Jesus. Zerubbabel was in the family line of Jesus (Matthew 1:12-13).