

Haggai

Haggai is the first of the Minor Prophets to have been written after the exile.

(Read Ezra 1:1-7) Why did God lead Cyrus to do this?
To fulfill His promises of restoration through earlier prophet.

(Read Ezra 5:1-2) We are able to see from these verses that Haggai & Zechariah played a significant role in prompting the people to carry on the work of rebuilding the temple.

(Read Ezra 6:14) This verse gives us a peek at the end, showing that the leadership of the prophets spurred the Israelites on to complete the temple.

The book of Haggai only spans about 4 months, from the end of summer to the beginning of winter.

Haggai is divided into 6 oracles.

chp. 1

(1st oracle)

(Read verses 1-2) In verse 2, God is addressing the unwillingness of the people to continue on with the work of rebuilding the temple. Why have they become unwilling? (Reference Ezra 4:4-5)

(2nd oracle 3-11)

(Read verses 3-6) What is verse 4 asking about?

The people have made their own comfort a priority over obeying God.

In verse 5, God tells the people to consider their ways. This implies they have not been doing what is right. But how do they know they've been doing wrong? Verse 6 answers this question.

What is the point being made in verse 6?

The people have been working hard, but they have not seen the fruits of their labor. They have no true satisfaction in life.

(Read verses 7-11) In verse 7, God again tells the people to consider their ways. For Him to say this twice, we know the people were being stubborn & unwilling to change. Just so there is no confusion, in verse 8, God very clearly tells the people what He wants & expects the people to do.

Beginning in verse 9, God again mentions the lack of satisfaction the people have had from their labors. This time, however, He is clear about the cause. What is it?

They have refrained from rebuilding the temple & are too busy seeing to their own houses & lives.

(3rd oracle 12-15)

(Read verses 12-15) In verse 12, we see the people received & obeyed God's word. Until now, Haggai has referred to God as the Lord of Hosts or the Lord Almighty. Now he refers to God as the Lord their God. Why do you think Haggai made this change?

The people had not been obeying God & Haggai was identifying Him as the ultimate authority. Now that they are obeying Him, this change reflects the change in relationship.

Haggai has been pointing out that God was not with the people because they did not obey Him & rebuild the temple. In verse 13, now that the people are obedient, God says He is with them. What is the lesson He is trying to teach them?

God's presence, being with them, is dependent on the obedience to & relationship with Him rather than any building.

How long did Haggai have to deliver God's word before they began working on the temple?
24 days

chp. 2

(4th oracle 1-9)

(Read verses 1-5) At this point, the people have been working on the temple for about a month. In this amount of time, they were able to lay the foundation. (Ezra 3:8-12)

Why are the people discouraged?

They have worked long enough to realize how difficult this task is going to be & it isn't even going to look as good as the previous temple.

God knows they are discouraged. They feel they are unable to match the past. So He is letting them know they are not alone. He is with them & will make them sufficient.

(Read verses 6-9) God says He is going to shake the heavens & the earth. Does this literally mean storms & earthquakes? Probably not. More likely, it refers to the way God is going to rattle the nations & change political control of the region.

Once again, God addresses the concern that this temple will not be as great as Solomon's temple. Why would the people believe Solomon's temple was greater than the present one?

They are viewing it with human eyes & judging it by outward appearance. However, outward appearance is not what makes something valuable to God. (Reference Luke 21:5-6, John 2:18-21)

(5th oracle 10-19)

(Read verses 10-14) Here, God makes 2 points through asking

questions of the priests. First, contact with anything consecrated does not make anything else consecrated. Second, anything a defiled person comes in contact with also becomes defiled. Then, to make sure there is no confusion, God declared that this is how it is with His people.

What is the ultimate point being made here?

The people have not turned their hearts back to God.

They are still consumed with sin, which causes them to be defiled. Working on a holy, consecrated project did not cleanse the people of their sin & make them consecrated. Instead, it caused the project to be defiled, just as they are.

(Read verses 15-19) God has frustrated the work of their hands. What is the lesson He is trying to make them see? When personal devotion to God is absent, God's blessing from our lives is removed & nothing seems to go right. However, when we change our hearts & devote ourselves to God, He restores blessing to our lives.

(6th oracle 20-23)

(Read verses 20-23) What does it mean for God to make Zerubbabel like His signet ring?

Kings used signet rings like an official stamp. If something carried the official seal from the King's signet ring, it was as good as the King being there in person & saying it. Therefore, God was saying He would work through Zerubbabel & he would represent God.