

Haggai

“Get To Work”

I. Introduction to Haggai

Haggai is the thirty-seventh book of the Old Testament and the tenth among the Minor Prophets. This is the second shortest book of the Old Testament containing only thirty-eight verses. The only book shorter than Haggai is Obadiah.

Haggai, along with Zechariah and Malachi are ‘post-exilic’ prophets; meaning their ministries took place after the Jews returned to repatriate the land.

Haggai’s ministry lasted only three to four months, but had a profound impact upon the people and the work.

Little is known about Haggai personally. He refers to himself as a prophet and more than twenty times, he claims his message came from the Lord. His name means ‘festival of the Lord’. He was a contemporary of Zechariah, Joshua the priest, Zerubbabel the governor, and served during the reign of Darius, King of Persia. His ministry took place in the year 520 B.C. Although a key player in the story-line of the book of Ezra, he is only mentioned twice; in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14.

The Bible is silent regarding the person Haggai, but tradition has much to say. Tradition holds:

- As a young child he was taken captive and grew up in Babylon. He returned to Jerusalem as an old man.
- As a young boy he had seen the original Temple, built by Solomon
- He authored many Psalms (Psalm 137, 145-148)
- He was a key player along with Ezra in developing the Old Testament canon of Scripture.

We are not clear what aspects of these traditions are valid, though at least, the first two seem to be collaborated within Scripture.

Haggai is best understood in conjunction with the book of Ezra.

- Ezra 1:1-4 (536 B.C.) Cyrus, King of Persia signed decree allowing the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild the temple.
- Ezra 2:64-65 Close to 50,000 Jews began the first Zionist movement and made their way back to Judah.
- Ezra 3:1-2 Seven months later, the altar was rebuilt and sacrifices were offered for the first time in 70 years – since captivity.
- Ezra 3:8 Fourteen months later the foundation of the Temple was laid. This caused a dual reaction:
 - Ezra 3:22 Great praise
 - Ezra:12 Great discouragement; after two years, that’s all they had to show for their efforts.
- Ezra 4:4-5 Opposition arose against their work.
 - Attempts to trouble the work
 - Threats and accusations
- Ezra 4:21 Because of the accusations, the King commands the work to stop.
- Ezra 4:24 the work ceased for fourteen years.
- Ezra 5:1 we are introduced to Haggai and Zechariah. This is the point in Ezra’s story-line that the books of Haggai and Zechariah fit into the narrative.
- Ezra 5:2 The work begins again.

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- The secret to understanding what caused the work to begin again is recorded in the books of Haggai and Zechariah.

Haggai’s message is designed to arouse the people from spiritual apathy. He was like an alarm clock warning the people it was time to rise and get to work; not to hit the snooze button and fall back into apathy.

II. Outline

Haggai consists of two chapters, but divides into four short messages declared over three months. Chapter one’s single message sub-divides into the following exhortations. All his messages were designed to encourage the people to complete the task to which God had called them.

Section 1	Message 1	Rebuke	Haggai 1:2-4
Section 2	Message 2	Result	Haggai 1:5-6
Section 3	Message 3	Remedy	Haggai 1:7
Section 4	Message 4	Resuming the Work	Haggai 1:12-15

The application in our lives is simple; you will be exhorted to action:

Galatians 6:9 “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”

Chapter 1

Haggai 1:1 introduces us to other key players in the book.

- King Darius Hystaspes, King of Persia
- Haggai the prophet; refers to himself as a prophet more than any other.
- Zerubbabel the Governor, grandson of King Jehoiachin
 - Jehoiachin was taken captive to Babylon after a three month reign.
 - Spent thirty-six years in prison
 - Was released and treated favorably by King Evil-Merodach
 - Had a son named Shealtiel and Grandson Zerubbabel
- Zerubbabel’s name is Babylonian. He may have grown up with worldly influences yet he chose to follow the Lord.
- Joshua the priest; not the same Joshua from Moses day.
- The Fifty-thousand Jews who returned to Jerusalem to carry out the work.
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Haggai 1:2 begins the first of four messages directed at the people. Keep in mind, the work of God had ceased because of discouragement and opposition.

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Section 1 Message 1 Rebuke Haggai 1:2-4

Haggai 1:2 “This people says, ‘The time has not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built.’”

- This is the root of the problem Haggai seeks to repair. By default, the people were saying this is not a good time to increase my spiritual commitment or increase my spiritual service

Haggai 1:4 “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?”

- If it is not time to focus on the things of God, what time is it?
 - Family
 - Difficulties
 - Love of the world (2Timothy 4:10) “. . . for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.”
- For the returning Jews it was “paneled houses”
 - Perhaps the cedar wood (panels) that was dedicated to the Temple was misused on their own houses. Haggai 1:8
 - Perhaps they desired to live in luxury
 - Or simply provide a family home

Section 2 Message 2 Result Haggai 1:5-6

Haggai 1:5-6 “Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes.”

This is the result of not putting the Lord first.

- They did not have enough. Not because they were lazy and wouldn’t work, but because of spiritual poverty.

Often natural problems have spiritual solutions.

- Not all poverty is spiritual
 - But theirs was
- Not all sickness is spiritual
 - But theirs was
- Not all trials are spiritual
 - But theirs was

The solution would be found in putting the Lord first.

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Section 3 Message 3 Remedy Haggai 1:7

Haggai 1:7 “Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways!”

They were to give careful thought their spiritual condition. It is always a good idea to take inventory of your life. An honest evaluation would lead this people to conclude that their lives were not being blessed.

Application

How is your devotional life and service to the Lord?

When did you last witness, disciple someone, pray for others?

Get back to work!

Haggai 1:8 “Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,” says the LORD.”

The people complained - that they didn't have wood.

God's response – then get wood

Our complaints:

We are not qualified; then get training

We don't know how; then learn

I don't have time; make time, prioritize your life

Section 4 Message 4 Resuming the Work Haggai 1:12-15

Haggai 1:14 “So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,”

The people and their leadership obey the Lord; and feared the Lord (desired to please Him above all else)

The book Haggai is a picture of exhortation:

Haggai spoke Haggai 1:13

The Lord stirred Haggai 1:14

The people worked Haggai 1:14

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Chapter 2

Chapter 2 contains the final three messages. It took one message (Chapter 1) to get them to work, and three more (Chapter 2) to keep them going.

Haggai 2:1-9 the Temples

This message is delivered one month later; after the work had resumed. The people were discouraged that their Temple was not as magnificent as Solomon's. Their discouragement was caused by two things.

One, they were focusing on their own strength.

The solution is found in verse 4: be strong; verse 5 the Spirit of God is their source

Two, they failed to see that God had greater things in their future.

Verse 7 speaks of the “Desire of Nations”; a promise of Christ

Haggai 2:10-19 Holiness

This message is two months later and focuses on that which can undo the work of God.

Haggai teaches a lesson on holiness:

Work and worship do not remove sin. Sin is removed through confession and repentance.

Sin will defile work and worship.

Haggai 2:20-23 Unshakable

God will shake the nation, but Zerubbabel, nor the work of God, will be shaken.

III. Why Study Haggai

- Haggai gives a better understanding of Ezra
- It complements the message of Zechariah
- Gives a picture of how exhortation works
 - The Word of the Lord
 - From the servant of the Lord
 - Empowered by the Spirit of the Lord
 - Accomplishes the work of the Lord

IV. Jesus in Haggai

We see Jesus as the Desire of Nations in Haggai 2:7

Zerubbabel is a type of Christ in Haggai 2:23