

# Outline of the Book of Haggai

## Haggai's Work

Haggai was a prophet of God that prophesied to the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon during the year 536 BC (i.e., the first year of Cyrus over Babylon / cf. Ezra 1:1-2). These Jews were led back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple of Jehovah that had been destroyed by the Babylonians. Seventy years had been spent in Babylonian captivity as foretold by Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 25:11). God had **commanded** that the temple now be constructed (cf. Ezra 1:1-2; 6:14). Zerubbabel returns to Jerusalem with 50,000 people to build the temple under the authority of Cyrus (cf. Ezra 1:1-2 / see also Isa. 44:28). A strong and zealous start by the people results in the completion of the foundation of the temple after two years of being in Jerusalem (cf. Ezra 3:8ff). The adversaries; i.e., the Samaritans, soon discourage the Jews from building. The Samaritans "*weakened the hands of the people of Judah*" and "*frustrated their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia*" (cf. Ezra 4:4-5, 24). The next 15 years pass with no work being done on the temple of God (compare Ezra 4:24 to 6:1ff). The people failed to keep God's command to build the temple and were thereby in sin. The objective of God's prophet Haggai was to motivate the people to get back to the work of rebuilding the temple.

## Date of Haggai

Ezra 5:1-2 reveals that Haggai entered upon his work on the first day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius. The prophet's first address to the people regarding their delinquency made such an impression, that Zerubbabel and Joshua with the people set about the work of building as early as the twenty-fourth day of the same month (comp. Hagg. 1:1 and 14f.). Four years later (total of 21 years) the temple is completed (six total years of actual construction) (compare Ezra 1:1; 3:8 and 6:15). This dates the book to the second year of Darius the king (i.e., 519 BC) (note that the 17 years in Jerusalem minus 536 BC equals 519 BC).

## First of four Oracles: Get Busy

Haggai reveals God's displeasure in the people's 15 year period of disobedience (Hag. 1:4). Once again the Lord commands, through Haggai, that the people get to work on the temple (Hag. 1:8). Haggai calls upon the people in Jerusalem to reason with God. Haggai asks them to consider why they are in the current distress of drought (Hab. 1:11), little harvest (2:16), mildew and hail (Hag. 2:17). Why all the distress? "*Because of my house that lies waste, while ye run every man to his own house*" (Hag. 1:9). The sovereign God of creation has called upon nature to correct His people. After Haggai's "*stirring*" words (cf. Hag. 1:14) the Jews "*consider*" these things and respond with obedience and fear (Hab. 1:12). The people begin working 23 days after Haggai delivers the first oracle (Hag. 1:15). The great lesson learned is that God's blessings are contingent upon Israel's obedience (compare Hag. 1:7-9 with 2:19).

## Second of four Oracles: Encouragement

Haggai delivers his second revelation to the people of Jerusalem three and a half weeks after the people begin working on the temple. Once again discouragement settled in among the builders. This time it was not the Samaritans but rather their view of the current temple. Ezra tells us that after the foundation was laid many mourned due to the little stature of the temple in comparison to Solomon's (cf. Ezra 3:12 and Hag. 2:3). Haggai encourages the people by telling them to be strong because God is with them in their efforts (Hag. 2:4).

## Third of Four Oracles: A Call for Repentance

Haggai delivers the third revelation to the people of Jerusalem three months after the work on the temple had started. Though the people had obeyed through fear (cf. Hag. 1:12) and begun to rebuild the temple (Hag. 1:14)

they were still considered “*unclean*” (Hag. 2:14). Haggai calls upon the people to consider their sinful ways and turn to God that they may receive the blessings of Jehovah (2:15-18). The book of Zechariah will bear out the fact that even though they began to build the temple God’s blessings continued to be withheld from them due to their disobedience (cf. Zech. 8:9-13).

#### **Four of Four Oracles: The Hope of the Anointed Christ**

Haggai delivers this last oracle the same day that he received and delivered the third (i.e., three months after the work of the temple had begun). Zerubbabel is told that the Lord has chosen him to bring about His anointed one. Through Christ all eternal blessings will be found to those who turn their hearts to him.

#### **Consider the kings of Persia**

- **Cyrus** (559 [536 over Babylon] – 530 BC) – Allowed Jews to return to Jerusalem, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-2). The Jews efforts were frustrated all the days of Cyrus (Ezra 4:5).
- **Cambyses** (530 – 522 BC) (the Ahasuerus or Xerxes of Ezra 4:6-23) – Killed his brother Smerdis to secure his position as King of Persia. Cambyses received letters from the Samaritans in relation to the construction of the temple. He authorized a decree to cease the work on the temple due to the history of Jewish rebellion in Jerusalem (cf. Ezra 4:19-21).
- **Gomates (Pseudo-Smerdis)** (521 BC) – Laid claims to being the murdered brother of Cambyses and thereby usurped the throne of Cambyses while he was away in Egypt. Gomates was killed by a Persian officer and thus his rule lasts for only a few months.
- **Darius the Great** (521 -486 BC) – During the second year of Darius (i.e., 519 BC) Haggai and Zechariah prophesied unto the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem and encouraged them to return to the work of the temple (Ezra 4:24-5:1). Tattenai (the governor beyond the River / Ezra 5:3) questioned the validity of said work and wrote a letter to Darius requesting that a search be made in the Persian archives as to whether or not Cyrus ever gave a decree that the temple be constructed (cf. Ezra 5:17). Darius found that Cyrus did give such a decree (Ezra 6:3) and thereby gave authority to Zerubbabel and the Jews to continue the work (Ezra 6:14). Four years latter, the sixth year of Darius, the temple was completed (Ezra 6:15).

## Chapter 1

- I. The Bleak state of Judah is a reflection of their failing to build the temple of Jehovah (Haggai's First Message to Judah) (1:1-11):**
- A.** *"In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying"* (1:1).
1. The second year of Darius was the year 519 BC. The temple of God had lain dormant for 15 years (cf. introduction). The building of the temple was a commandment of God and thereby the people were in sin for letting it sit idle (cf. Ezra 6:14).
  2. After a 15 year work stoppage (see introduction) God sends His prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people to begin the building process. Haggai preached divine revelation and 23 days latter the people of God get to work on the temple (comp. Hag. 1:1 to 1:14-15).
- B.** *"Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, this people say, it is not the time for us to come, the time for Jehovah's house to be built. Then came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, while this house lies waste?"* (1:2-4).
1. Some believe that the Jews were looking to Jeremiah's prophecy regarding spending 70 years in captivity and concluding that their time had not yet been completed. Some may have counted the captivity from the second or third wave of captives rather than the first wherein Daniel was taken (i.e. 605 BC / cf. Dan. 1:1, 21). Ezekiel, along with 10,000 others, was taken in the second deportation out of Jerusalem at 597 BC (II Kg. 24:14ff; Jer. 29:1; Ezek. 1:1-2). The final invasion of Babylon into Palestine occurred during the reign of Zedekiah (590 BC). If Babylonian captivity was counted from the time of Ezekiel's capture rather than Daniel's then the people would have a point; however, it is clear that the captivity began with Daniel and that now, 70 years latter, God has fulfilled His promise to return the remnant to Judah.
  2. Haggai seems to use sarcasm by saying, 'if you say that it is not time to build God's house are you justified in saying that it is time to build luxurious homes for yourselves while God's house lies in ruins?' (see study # 1; The Use of Sarcasm in the Bible). The prophet reasons with the people. If the captivity is not complete is it ok to let God's house lay wasted and for people to spend all their time, energies, and monies in building their own homes?
  3. A "ceiled" home is one that no expense had been spared in its construction. It may very well be that those who returned with Zerubbabel 15 years earlier had used all the cedar wood provided by Cyrus for their own homes rather than on the temple.
- C.** *"Now therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts: consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earns wages earns wages to put it into a bag with holes"* (1:5-6).
1. The prophet, by divine decree, calls upon the Jews to "*consider their ways*." Fifteen years have past and the house of God lays waste. What have you been doing for these years? The phrase "consider your ways" is used four times throughout this book. This would certainly be a good question for any Christian who has neglected spiritual growth, repentance, worship, or any other spiritual aspect of life (see study # 2; Consider Your Ways).
  2. The prophet gives the Jews a panoramic view of their toil over the past fifteen years. They have worked hard yet brought in little. The blessings of harvest and the fruit of the vine appear to have been very little. Due to the desperate times clothing was insufficient and they were cold in the winter. Their money did not go very far due to the times of want. Can they not see that something is wrong? God has withheld these blessings from them due to their disobedience.
- D.** *"Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith Jehovah. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? Saith Jehovah of hosts. Because of my house that lies waste, while ye run every man to his own house"* (1:7-9).

1. Once again the Lord asks Judah to *“consider your ways.”* Judah is called upon to consider the current hardships and its relation to avoiding the command of God to build the temple (see study # 2).
  2. All the hardships of Judah are attributed to the house of God lying waste, *“while ye run every man to his own house.”* Their interest had taken another rout over these 15 years and God is not pleased. When the people get busy God’s blessings will return to them.
  3. Sometimes people today can get so wrapped up in trying to make it through difficult times in this life that they forget to put time into serving God. God uses natural resources to afflict His people that they may correct their ways (see study # 3; God Corrects those whom He Loves).
- E. *“Therefore for your sake the heavens withhold the dew, and the earth withholdeth its fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the grain, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground brings forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands”* (1:10-11).
1. While the people may look to reasons why the ground has not been watered with rain and the consequential poor harvest the Lord tells them exactly why this has happened. Judah has not completed the tasks that God had given them; i.e., build the temple.
  2. The Lord has fulfilled His promise to bring them back to Jerusalem and now they needed to keep His charge (cf. Deut. 30:1-5; Jer. 29:8-10).
- II. **The People give Heed to Haggai’s charge and get back to Work on the Temple (1:12-15):**
- A. *“Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of Jehovah their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as Jehovah their God had sent him; and the people did fear before Jehovah”* (1:12).
1. Upon hearing the words of Haggai the people were convicted of their sin of leaving off building the temple.
  2. They had honestly “considered their ways” and found themselves to be in sin. The word of God states that they now, *“obeyed the voice of Jehovah their God.”* It was time for them to get back to building the temple.
- B. *“Then spake Haggai Jehovah’s messenger in Jehovah’s message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith Jehovah. And Jehovah 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 did work on the house of Jehovah of hosts, their God, in the four and twentieth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king”* (1:13-15).
1. Twenty three days after hearing Haggai’s words of divine revelation they get back to work. They had considered the blessings of the land being withheld, how hard their toil was for seemingly nothing, the fact that they had left off building when they should have been working on the temple, and that God had given them a command and they had not fulfilled it. The preaching of Haggai, by divine revelation, *“stirred up the spirit”* of the governor, the high priests, and all the people. Gospel preaching that does not *“stir the spirit”* to do right is not gospel preaching (see study # 4; Preachers and Preaching). Again, those who’s spirits are not stirred or agitated by truth have no true love of truth or concern for eternity.
  2. Through a spirit of faith and love for the Lord and His blessings the people return to building the temple. Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priests lead the people back to work.

## Chapter 2

- I. **Jehovah’s Prophet delivers words of Encouragement (Haggai’s Second Message to Judah) (2:1-9):**
- A. *“In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? And how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes as nothing?”* (2:1-3).

1. The seventh month in the Hebrew calendar was Tishri. Tishri was an important month to the Jews. The Day of Atonement was on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of this month. The 15<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> days of Tishri are the Feast of Tabernacles or booths. This was a seven day period of sacrificing and marked the conclusion of the harvest season. The 23<sup>rd</sup> of Tishri was a day of holy convocation (cf. Lev. 23).
  2. Near the end of the feast of Tabernacles the Lord tells Haggai to speak words of divine revelation to Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest. The people had now been building the temple for about three and one half weeks (cf. Haggai 1:15).
  3. Haggai is to pose a question. Who among the living has actually seen the former temple that Solomon built? What comparisons do you now make between Solomon's and the one you are now working on?
  4. We may recall that 15 years earlier the foundation of the new temple was laid. Apparently many elderly people looked upon it and discern that it would not come close to meeting the glorious state of Solomon's temple and thereby wept (cf. Ezra 3:12).
- B.** *“Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work: for I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts, according to the word that I covenanted with you when you came up out of Egypt, and my Spirit abode among you: fear ye not”* (2:4-5).
1. God has given a command; i.e., build my temple (cf. Ezra 6:14; Hag. 1:8). The people begin the work; however, the forces of discouragement have crushed their desire to fulfill God's will. The Samaritans and the size of the temple have discouraged them. Jehovah's purpose through Haggai was to encourage the people to do that which they knew He wanted them to do; i.e., build.
  2. Haggai's encouraging message was *“be strong and work: for I am with you saith Jehovah of host.”* The Christian today can be encouraged to do the work of God because He is with us and will strengthen us through His word (cf. Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:11; II Tim. 2:1) (see study # 5; God's Will for the Christian).
  3. When fear of man and discouragement come it does not find its origins in God. God had promised Israel that He would be with them and fight for them if they would put their whole hearted trust in Him (Ex. 14:14; 19:4-6).
- C.** *“For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations; and the precious things of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts”* (2:6-9).
1. No doubt these few verses pose difficulty in interpretation. Is Haggai referring to a future time when God would literally destroy or shake nations and that Judah would rise as a national power house? Would God literally fill this new temple with the plunder of silver and gold?
  2. It seems likely that Haggai is looking to a day when the God of all creation shall cause kingdoms such as the Medes, Persians, Grecians, and Romans to rise and fall yet His glorious kingdom shall remain.
  3. The house of Jehovah God would be more glorious in the future. God's kingdom shall be the focal point of the entire world (i.e., the place where forgiveness of Jew and Gentile is found).

## **II. Haggai's Third Message to Judah: A Display of Humble Admission of Sin is Desired by Jehovah God and thereby the people shall be Blessed with Sustenance (2:10-19):**

- A.** *“In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any food, shall it become holy? And the priests answered and said, No”* (2:10-12).
1. The Lord gives Haggai another prophecy for Judah exactly three months after the work had been started (cf. Haggai 1:15).

2. The priests were the ones who made a distinction between clean and unclean things and thereby taught the people (cf. Lev. 10:8ff).
  3. The “*holy flesh*” was no doubt the flesh of animals that had been offered as burnt offerings to Jehovah God. Haggai poses a question to the priests. If they bear holy flesh in the skirt of their garment will their garment, if it touches something like bread, wine, oil, or any food, cause the food to become holy? The priest rightly answered no because holiness is not transferred through one’s garments.
- B. “*Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by reason of a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, it shall be unclean*” (2:13).
1. Another question is posed to the priests. If one has contact with a dead body will things he touch become unclean? The priests answered yes (cf. Numb. 19:22).
  2. Interestingly the holy things cannot be transferred to other things as holy; however, unclean things can be transferred. This was God’s sovereign law.
- C. “*Then answered Haggai and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith Jehovah; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean*” (2:14).
1. Apparently what was taking place was that as the people began the building process God had not yet restored His blessings of rain and fruitfulness of the land. The people did not understand. They had now begun the work as He had commanded and were even offering sacrifices to Him on the altar. The nation; however, remained unclean and everything they touched was unclean. Their work on their farms and the temple was unfruitful and unacceptable due to their unclean moral condition.
  2. Why was this so? The answer is simple. The people of God were in sin for the 15 year work stoppage. They had apparently repented of their sin and now had begun the work of the temple and even made sacrifices. Why did God still consider them unclean? I believe that the problem of their uncleanness may be found in Numbers 15:29-30. The man or woman who sinned with a “*high hand*” is one who has “*despised the word of Jehovah and has broken his commandment*” (Numb. 15:31). The one who sins “*unwittingly*” is the man or woman who sins yet they acknowledge their fault and change their ways. While the people of God had acknowledged that the reason the Lord’s blessings had been withheld from them was their disobedience they apparently have not asked Him to forgive them for their error. Israel ought to have offered sin offerings unto the Lord for their error. There is a great lesson in this for us today. We cannot be a people who only acknowledge of our sins, turn away from them, and expect that God has forgotten about our little experience because we are not doing it any longer. We must, with a spirit of humility, go to the heavenly father in prayer asking for forgiveness and couple this with works worthy of repentance (cf. Acts 8:22; I Jn. 1:9) (see study # 6; Forgiveness of Sins).
  3. Furthermore, just because one is going through the motions of God’s worship does not mean that He accepts it. Jesus reveals this fact at Matthew 15:9. Isaiah and Amos warned the people of simply going through the motions of worshipping God without truly turning to him (cf. Isa. 1:11ff; Amos 5:21ff).
- D. “*And now, I pray you, consider from this day and backward, before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of Jehovah. Through all that time, when one came to a heap of twenty measures there were but ten; when one came to the winevat to draw out fifty vessels, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the work of your hands; yet ye **turned** not to me, saith Jehovah*” (2:15-17).
1. Note that Haggai tells the people to “*consider from **this day and backward**...*” To this day (and going back before one stone was laid in the building process of the temple / i.e., 15 years ago) they do not receive God’s blessings. When they go to the field and expect a great harvest of wheat they only find fifty percent of what should have been expected. Likewise there was even less than fifty percent of expected wine production. Said harvest was affected due to Jehovah’s blasting the crops with mildew and hail that frustrated the work of the people’s hands.
  2. Again, we can see that at present they did not receive the blessings of God even though they had now began to follow God’s instructions (cf. Haggai 1:14-15).

3. “*Turning*” to Jehovah means much more than simple acknowledgment of wrong. It means to not only identify the error but make the proper **sacrifices** (for our day = prayerfully asking for forgiveness) and stop doing the wrong (cf. Heb. 13:15).
- E. *“Consider, I pray you, from this day and backward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, since the day that the foundation of Jehovah’s temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? Yea, the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-tree have not brought forth; from this day will I bless you”* (2:18-19).
1. Nothing had changed in the production of the land. Jehovah has control over all things of this creation (even the crops of the field) (see study # 7; The Sovereignty of Jehovah).
  2. Now, the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the ninth month, would mark the beginnings of a change in the people’s state of blessing. The inference is that they have learned their lesson, made their sacrifices, and changed their ways. They now understand that God’s blessings are contingent upon a total change of heart that goes from rebellion to whole hearted service to Him (see study # 8; God’s Conditional Blessings). Let the Christian know today that even though we may repent of our evil doings and begin obeying God’s commands there is more that we must do to maintain our fellowship with the Lord. We must not only acknowledge our sin but humble ourselves before Jehovah God and pray that He would forgive us of our trespasses.

### III. **Haggai’s Fourth Message to Judah (2:20-23):**

- A. *“And the word of Jehovah came the second time unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother”* (2:20-22).
1. Haggai receives a second message on the same day that he receive the one discussed above. Haggai has pronounced the hope of conquering nations, restoring Israel to her homeland, and that of the coming Messiah.
  2. God would cause nations to fall and rise by His sovereign rule for the good of humanity.
- B. *“In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith Jehovah, and will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee, saith Jehovah of hosts”* (2:23).
1. Through somewhat veiled language the prophet reveals that Zerubbabel is God’s choice for the lineage of the Messiah to continue. The promise that God made to Abraham and latter to David is renewed in Zerubbabel (cf. Gen. 12:1ff; II Sam. 7:11-14).
  2. Matthew reveals that Zerubbabel is in the lineage of Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 1:12, 16).