

## PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST Haggai 1:1-2:9

Haggai's message was to the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem after living in captivity in Babylon.

Bear in mind, Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple some 70 years earlier. When the Jews returned from exile they faced the overwhelming task of rebuilding. The first group of returnees rebuilt the altar and made preliminary attempts to clear the rubble and lay the foundation for a second temple.

Their hostile Samaritan neighbours offered to join in the work, but the Jews refused them. Subsequently, the Samaritans threatened the workers, bringing the work to a halt. Sixteen years had gone by, when Haggai appeared on the scene with the prevailing and blunt message: *It's time to finish rebuilding the Temple.*

### Stop making excuses

***"The LORD of Hosts says this: These people say: The time has not come for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt" (Haggai 1:2, HCSB).***

They proposed to build God's house, but they just weren't getting it done. They made excuses because they were immersed in their own selfish mundane interests.

***"The word of the LORD came through Haggai the prophet: Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?" (Haggai 1:3-4).***

They lived in luxurious paneled homes, while God camped out in the ruins. They lived in comfortable dwellings, while God remained homeless.

### Consider your ways

***"Now, the LORD of Hosts says this: Think carefully about your ways: You have planted much but harvested little. You eat but never have enough to be***

**satisfied. You drink but never have enough to become drunk. You put on clothes but never have enough to get warm. The wage earner puts his wages into a bag with a hole in it" (Haggai 1:5-6).**

Haggai wanted them to measure the consequences of their actions.

- Their abundant sowing resulted in meagre reaping.
- Their food failed to satisfy
- They could never seem to get a filling of wine
- Their clothing wasn't adequate to keep them warm in the winter
- Their money disappeared as through holes in their pockets.

Haggai was saying, "All your efforts are in vain, when you choose not to put God first. Don't you get it? God is touching you where it hurts, so that you may seek to put first things first. Put God's work first."

Jesus commands us: **"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you" (Matthew 6:33).**

### **Go, bring and build**

**"Go up into the hills, bring down lumber, and build the house. Then I will be pleased with it and be glorified, says the LORD" (Haggai 1:8).**

Why should the Temple be re-built? That God may be pleased and glorified. When God is not first we are indifferent to his glory—his fame and his reputation being spread. But when God is first, revealing his glory is first on our minds.

When the people obeyed in fear, God sent word: **"I am with you" (1:13).** When God is first, he blesses us. **"From this day on I will bless you" (2:19).**

**"Be strong, be strong, be strong....declares the Lord and work. For I am with you" (2:4).**

There is work for all of us. God is working with us. We are His co-workers. Are you working with God? Or are you working against Him?

God's says: Put Me first, by putting first things first. Keep the work of God alive. Glory will follow! The Messiah is on the way, with the reward (Rev.22:12).

***Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).***