
 THOSE WEIRD LITTLE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS - HAGGAI

Haggai is one of the minor prophets in the Old Testament and is 2 chapters long so it is one of the shorter ones. Haggai is a little more straightforward and easier to understand what is going on. It records Haggai prophesying to the people returned from exile in Babylon and their response to it.

Haggai prophesied in 520 BC. Specific dates are given to us in 1:1, so there is no doubt about when this happened. The Jews had returned from exile around 538 BC, so they had been back in Jerusalem for around 18 years. When they returned, it was under the rule of King Cyrus of Persia who had just overthrown the Babylonian empire. King Cyrus sent the Jews back to Jerusalem telling them to rebuild the temple to their God. However, they only laid the foundations before stopping due to opposition they faced.

Haggai 1:1-6 (NIV)

The Lord's house still lies in ruins and has not been rebuilt. The people live in their own panelled houses, so they do not have it too bad. This is quite the contrast. People in houses, while God's house in ruins. Throughout the Old Testament the state of the temple often reflects the faith of the people at that given time. The temple in ruins shows that the Jews have neglected God. There seems to also be drought and famine, not enough food or water and there also seems to be economical problems. There seems to not be enough of anything for the people. They might have been blind to this, but as Haggai speaks to Joshua and Zerubbabel, it seems a little outrageous that the people are living in built houses while the temple is not built. They have had many years to finish building this, yet they have not. They found it easy to neglect and forget about God.

It is so easy to neglect God as we have daily distractions, busy lifestyles and societal pressures to deal with every day. It often causes us to

overlook and diminish the importance of making God the centre of our everyday lives.

Haggai 1:7-11

drought and famine in the land is not a coincidence. It is because they have not rebuilt the temple. This also can be connected back to Deuteronomy 28. God gives blessings if they are to obey the covenant, and curses if they are to disobey the covenant. Drought, wine and olive oil are all things affected as part of the covenant curses, which shows they have been disobedient. They have not prioritised God which breaks the first of the ten commandments. Love the Lord with all your heart and mind and soul. If they did this, I think rebuilding the temple would be at the front of their minds.

God gives a chance for them to right their wrongs. Go and rebuild the temple so that He may take pleasure in it and be honoured. The temple is a place for God to meet with the people, a place of worship and prayer which is why it is so important that it be rebuilt.

Haggai then speaks to the people as a whole, and God says that He is with them.

The people have a quick response, and they go and work on the temple. God is with them, even when the temple is in ruins. His presence is not dependent on a building, it is dependent on the hearts of the people. He was with them the whole time, but they only realise when they open their hearts back up to Him.

Haggai 2:3-5

God continues to encourage them, His spirit remains among them no matter how spectacular the temple is. The important thing is that He has their attention now. He has not been pushed to the back of their minds, and He surely delights in reconnecting with many of them. God's spirit is not confined to a building, we know this under the new covenant of Jesus. We are the temple, and it is His spirit that dwells in us.



God's heart is for our attention to be upon Him.

Haggai 2:15-19

They go from cursed as they neglect the temple to blessed by God as they return to Him and build this temple. This is a reflection of God's delight when we turn to Him.

What daily distractions have you let get in the way of your time with God? Maybe its societal pressures or a busy life. Maybe it's sticking to that Bible reading plan and not pushing it to the back of your mind. Maybe it is having some solitude each day, or switching up the music you listen to to worship music. God gave the Jews a chance to right their wrongs by telling them to rebuild the temple, so how can we make right the way we spend time with Him?

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REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

- How do you normally spend time with God throughout your day? Do you have a set routine?
- Is there something that often gets in the way of focusing on God?
- What does it mean to you that we are now God's temple where His spirit dwells?
- How does this affect the way you relate to God and others? Do you feel you have to meet certain standards/expectations? Why?
- Do you think your relationship with God is evident to others in the way you live?



CENTRAL BAPTIST

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