

The Gospel in
Haggai

*the pursuit of holiness in the hope
of God's eternal presence*



Field  *Notes*

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Field Notes

a journal of exploration and discovery



SacraScript



The Gospel in Haggai:
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Field Notes
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How does this book work?

Field Notes

INTRODUCTION

Keys to your Field Notes

Welcome to your *Field Notes* on Haggai. You are about to embark on a journey of discovery. Your destination is the ancient world of the prophet Haggai. In order to be ready for your exploration of this inspired book, we highly recommend you spend a few minutes understanding the way your *Field Notes* work. This book serves as a guide to the ancient biblical text as well as a journal for your discoveries along the way. Let's get started.

Studying the Bible

Studying the Bible is much like heading off into an unknown land to dig around the ruins of an ancient civilization. You need to know where to dig, what you are discovering, and what is important about what you find. This book will guide you on a journey of ancient discovery: the discovery of the meaning of the biblical text.

This Bible study follows the metaphor of an expedition, or a quest for biblical and theological discovery. Your *Field Notes* contain three specific parts which correspond to the three steps used in an ancient dig. Each step will help you in the process of understanding and applying God's Word to your soul. Each *Field Study* begins with learning the content and meaning of the text, followed by a section called *Discoveries*, which includes discussion questions, exercises, and activities to apply the text to your life. Let's begin by understanding the three steps.

Step one: Survey the land

The first step to making a discovery is a comprehensive survey of the land, notating everything that is around. In your *Field Notes*, the site is the biblical book we will study. This inspection helps us to better understand the characteristics of the terrain. With regard to the Bible, our survey helps us see the function of a book as part of the grand

A Field Study

Your *Field Notes* are divided into individual field studies. Each *Field Study* is designed to take a minimum of 30 minutes. The content of the *Field Study* takes at least 15 minutes, and the remainder is for *Discoveries* including discussion questions, exercises, and activities. Every *Field Study* contains over an hour's worth of questions and activities. They are designed for you to pick and choose the ones that are most helpful for you or your group.





The Persian Empire

The Persian empire reached its peak during the time of Ezra, around 458 B.C. It became the first empire in the history of the Middle East to encompass all three major rivers: the Euphrates, the Tigris, and the Indus.

Judea under Persian Rule

After the return from the exile beginning in 538 B.C., the Promised Land was no longer known as Israel and Judah. Under Persian rule, all this region belonged to a satrapy called *Beyond the River*. The northern region formerly known as Israel was now known as Samaria; and the southern region previously known as Judah was now named Judea. The Edomites had moved further northwest, taking part of the land that used to belong to Judah. This portion came to be known as Idumea.



Survey the Land

Haggai

God longs to dwell with his people

FIELD STUDY 1

Introduction

FIELD STUDY 1

Why should we study Haggai?

It's hard not to think about ourselves first. Even Christians fall into the trap of thinking about their desires before God's. The message in the book of Haggai deals with this timeless sin. Haggai is a must-read for us today because, even though Christ's name is not explicitly mentioned, it contains a truly Christian message. The advancement of God's will and purpose must be the top priority of everyone who professes to be a faithful follower of Christ.

Such a message and mission is absolutely critical to Christians living in an age that promotes two secular priorities that are utterly contrasting to godliness: a self-centered attitude and a self-serving agenda. We live in a world that focuses on meeting our own desires and offers God the leftovers. The book of Haggai seeks to encourage us and protect us from this mindset which has so often plagued the people of God. In the book of Haggai, God withdrew his blessing from his people, and they could not attain the comfortable life they desired because of inverted priorities. Jesus would teach this exact same message half a millennium later.

The book of Haggai shows the error of this self-serving tendency and exhorts Judah to put God first. God desires that his people rest confidently in his provision and care so that they can be free to focus their efforts and attention on advancing God's kingdom, knowing that he will take care of all their needs. Haggai shows us that we are to live our lives the same way our Savior Jesus

Matthew 16:25

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Ancient Discovery

Be sure to read the introductory section, "*How does this book work?*" before proceeding with this study.

750

700

650

600

550

500 B.C.

722 Northern kingdom falls to Assyrians

586 Southern kingdom goes into Babylonian exile

First exiles return from Babylon 538

Haggai prophecies 520



Who wrote this prophecy?

The book of Haggai contains four brief prophetic messages. In each case the author is identified as *Haggai the prophet* or simply *Haggai*.² There are no clues as to his family, age, or tribe of origin. The name Haggai literally means *festal* or *pertaining to the feast*. This might mean that Haggai was born on a day that corresponded to one of the national festivals of Israel commanded by God. Haggai's name may also anticipate his message of restoring the great feasts of Israel within the rebuilt temple.

The lack of certainty about Haggai's name does not prevent us in any way from correctly interpreting the message of his writing. The way the prophet is introduced without any connection to his forefathers could have three possible explanations. First, he was well-known in the community and needed no introduction other than being identified as *the prophet*. Second, the population of Jerusalem was quite small after the exile. Third, the scarcity of prophets during this time made it unnecessary to explain who he was since everyone would have known the prophet.

When did this happen?

Interestingly, Haggai's content and date can be determined with great precision. The prophecies narrated in the book were proclaimed for the first time "in the second year of Darius the king."³ The book also provides a precise day for the proclamation of each message.⁴ All dates correspond to the second year of Darius king of Persia, 520 B.C. This is supported with evidence from kings' lists, multiple Babylonian texts, as well as new moon tables from astronomical charts. The following table presents the information for each of the dates mentioned in the book. The first section corresponds to chapter 1 and includes both a primary message and the peoples' response given a few weeks later.

2. Haggai 1:1, 13; 2:1, 10, 20; Ezra 5:1; 6:14

3. Haggai 1:1

4. Haggai 1:1, 15; 2:1, 10, 20



The Prophet Haggai

This Russian icon of the prophet Haggai illustrates an Eastern tradition of creating a pictorial image for each of the prophets of God.

The Inscription of Darius the Great

The Behistun Inscription is Darius' history of his reign over the Persian empire chiseled into a rock face in three different languages. Attributed to Darius himself, it is located on Mount Behistun in the Kermanshah province of western Iran and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It gives witness to the historicity of Darius' reign and the events of the book of Haggai.

1250

1100

950

800

650

500 B.C.

Saul becomes king 1050

David becomes king 1010

Solomon becomes king 971

930 The kingdom divides

722 Northern kingdom falls to Assyria

Babylon destroys the temple 586

Cyrus' decree allowing the Jews to return 538



The Book of Haggai

Some have proposed that the book of Haggai was composed by a disciple of the prophet after he proclaimed his messages. The main argument supporting this idea is that the book speaks of Haggai and his prophecy in the third person. His message and its effect are *described* more than *proclaimed*. They are viewed as past events more than present ongoing situations.

Dates in Haggai

Message	Reference	Date	Date 520 B.C.
First Message	1:1–11	Sixth month, first day	August 29
Response	1:12–15	Sixth month, twenty-fourth day	September 21
Second Message	2:1–9	Seventh month, twenty-first day	October 17
Third Message	2:10–19	Ninth month, twenty-fourth day	December 18
Fourth Message	2:20–23	Ninth month, twenty-fourth day	December 18

The book of Haggai gives us just four messages of this man of God. Yet God used these few words to awaken and encourage the hearts of his people during times of great nostalgia and disillusion. They still encourage us and point us toward Christ.

What was going on at the time?

The immediate background to our story is recorded in the historical book of Ezra.¹ According to Ezra 1 and in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecies, God stirred the heart of Cyrus, King of Persia, to proclaim the following message in 539 B.C.² This was the first year of his reign.

This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has instructed me to build a house for him at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. And let each survivor, in whatever place he may now be living, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.

Ezra 1:2–4

In response to this edict, more than 40,000 people returned in several waves over the next hundred years, to the decimated land of Israel guided by Zerubbabel, Joshua, and others.³ This however, was less than half of those who had gone into exile 70 years earlier. The second

The Cyrus Cylinder

This ancient Persian clay cylinder dated from the 530's B.C. tells of Cyrus the Great's conquest of Babylon. It affirms that Cyrus allowed Babylonian captives to return home as recorded in the Book of Ezra. Today this cylinder is housed in the British Museum.



1. Ezra 1:1–4:5; 6:3–5
2. Jeremiah 25:11–14, 32:36–38
3. Ezra 2:1–2, 64–66

B.C. 600 590 580 570 560 550

605 Babylon first lays siege to Jerusalem

597 Babylon exiles first wave of people

586 Babylon destroys Jerusalem
Second wave exiled

582 Babylon exiles third wave of people

70 year exile in Babylon
605–535 B.C.



Rebuilding the Land

Many of the Jews who had been living in exile did not return to the land. Those who did, were discouraged because of the desolation of their cities, foreigners were living in the land and the nation was so much smaller than it once was. It was from the group of Jews that did not return to the land that Mordecai and Esther originated. They ended up in the Persian capital of Susa where Esther became queen in 485–464 B.C.

Governor

Zerubbabel was from the line of David and should have been the king when they returned to the Promised Land. However, since the land remained under Persian control, Zerubbabel was only able to serve as *governor*. There would not be any more kings from David's line in Israel's history, until Jesus.

Narrative

To supplement your understanding of the storyline of Haggai, we have included a guide to Old Testament narratives in the *Toolbox* section at the back of this book.

and the temple was the reason for their return, but they had quit. The book of Haggai describes the condition of their hearts during this time and the message that Haggai had for that generation. Eighteen years had passed, and the temple still looked just like it did when they had set the foundation! Nothing more had been built. This study will guide us through the events that led to the reconstruction of the temple and the renewal of joy and hope in the hearts of God's people.

Who was the audience?

Haggai addressed his prophetic messages to the people of Judah residing in Jerusalem in the fall of 520 B.C. These are the ones who returned from Babylon after the edict was issued by Cyrus king of Persia in 538 B.C. More specifically, Haggai spoke to the leaders of the nation, who had led them out of Babylon and back into the Promised Land.¹ He spoke both to their civil and religious leaders: Zerubbabel their governor and Joshua their high priest. He exhorted them to lead God's people and turn their hearts back to their LORD, encouraging them to live their lives according to God's will and desire so they could experience long lasting joy and blessing.

How should we read this type of book?

If we are to properly understand the meaning and message of any book of the Bible, we must know the literary genre to which the book belongs as well as the rules that guide the interpretation of the particular type of literature. Haggai consists of four *prophetic speeches* that function much like modern sermons. Haggai speaks within a narrative framework, while most prophets use a more poetic prose. In the following table you will find a summary of the characteristics of prophetic speeches which will guide the interpretation of the text.

**Standard of Cyrus the Great**

This is a depiction of the standard or symbol of Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid empire. It is called the Golden Falcon. This standard for Persian kings is described by Xenophon in *Cyropaedia* in Book VII, C.1, "the standard was a golden eagle, with outspread wings, borne aloft on a long spear-shaft, and to this day such is the standard of the Persian king."

Solomon, 2009

B.C. 600

590

580

570

560

550

605 Babylon first lays siege to Jerusalem

597 Babylon exiles first wave of people

586 Babylon destroys Jerusalem
Second wave exiled

582 Babylon exiles third wave of people

70 year exile in Babylon
605–535 B.C.

Excavate the Site

Haggai

God desires our fellowship and obedience

FIELD STUDY 2

Haggai 1:1–15

FIELD STUDY 2

How is the text arranged?

In order to understand the good news of Haggai and how it ultimately leads to the gospel of our LORD Jesus Christ, we must first look at the argument that the author presents, revealed in the logical structure of the book. Take a look at this section of Haggai and you will see how its composition can be outlined as follows:

Haggai 1:1–15

Section	Bible Text
Introduction	
The Date	¹ In the second year of Darius the King, on the first day of the sixth month,
The Characters	the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest:
The Occasion	² This is what the Sovereign LORD says: These people say that the time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD's house.
Rebuke and exhortation	
The divine rebuke	³ Then the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai: ⁴ Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? ⁵ Now this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Consider your ways.



Darius the Great

Haggai delivered his message during the second year of Darius' reign as king of Persia. Darius reigned over the Persian empire from 522–486 B.C. In world history he is also known as Darius Hystaspes or Darius I. He was one of the greatest rulers of the Achaemenid dynasty, who was noted for his administrative genius and for his great building projects.



Excavate the Site

FIELD STUDY 2

Haggai

God desires our fellowship and obedience

Haggai 1:1–15

Section	Bible Text
The divine rebuke (continued)	⁶ You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough. You drink, but you never have your fill. You put on clothing, but no one is warm. You earn wages, only to put them in money bags with holes. ⁷ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Consider your ways.
The divine exhortation	⁸ Go up to the mountains and bring down wood and build the house, so that I may be pleased with it and be glorified, says the LORD. ⁹ You expected much, but instead, it came to little. And what you brought home, I blew away. Why? declares the Sovereign LORD. Because of my house, which lies in ruins, while each of you is busy with his own house. ¹⁰ Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth has withheld its produce.
The divine discipline	¹¹ I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and everything the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on all of their labors.

The response

The response of the people	¹² Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all the remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the words of the prophet Haggai, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD.
The response of God	¹³ Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people the LORD's message: I am with you, declares the LORD. ¹⁴ So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. They came and worked on the house of the Sovereign LORD, their God, ¹⁵ on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the King.

This initial message from Haggai contains two parts. The first part (1–11) presents the original context of our story and the reason for the book. Those of the remnant, who had returned to the devastated land of Israel, in order to rebuild the temple and the city, had made progress in all that pertained to their personal needs and comfort. Nevertheless,



Joshua the High Priest

Joshua was the high priest at the time of the return from exile. His lineage is traced back to Aaron, brother of Moses in 1 Chronicles 6:11–15. He is also mentioned in Zechariah 3:1, 8; 6:11. Several people in the Old Testament bear this Hebrew name which means, *Yahweh is salvation*. The Greek form of this name is rendered in English—Jesus.

Haggai's Sermons

Some have described the prophecies of Haggai as a series of sermons because they are delivered in a way that seeks to reach the hearers at an emotional level, encouraging them to obey.





Profane

The word profane describes a person for whom the things of God have no importance or value. A profane person is one that deems worldly pursuits as more valuable and transcendent than spiritual and divine goals. One prominent example of this was Esau, the brother of Jacob. See Genesis 25:29–39; Hebrews 12:16.

Paneled Houses

The term paneled can mean covered, roofed or paneled, but the point is that it represents the *finishing touches*. Their homes were not in process, but were fully adorned while the temple laid in ruins. The term does not imply luxury or great expense although it could possibly be of that nature. To panel a house could imply they had actually cover the walls of their houses with wood paneling, possibly with cedar. See 1 Kings 6:15; 7:7; Jeremiah 22:14.

Søren Kierkegaard

In 1846, the Christian philosopher Søren Kierkegaard wrote a treatise called, *Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing*. For Kierkegaard, a pure heart was a simple and undivided heart. A heart that is devoted to a single passion. As believers, we must battle for the singular passion of God's glory and not our own.

they just thought it could wait! But God's ways are above man's ways, and God's thoughts are above man's thoughts.¹ This is one of the most important lessons of the book of Haggai. Our minds are worldly and profane. We need God's Word to help us see our lives and the world around us from a divine, spiritual perspective.

Haggai communicated his message by presenting contrasting concepts. The people of Judah dwelt in *paneled houses* while at the same time the house of the LORD of Hosts was in *ruins*. In the midst of economic hardship, the people had focused only on their own needs and adorning their own houses. God's disputation with his people came to a point of caution: *Consider your ways*. (3–5)

Daily life was not going well for the remnant. God had insured that their most basic needs would not be fully met. Food, drink, clothes, and wages all lacked. They were falling further behind rather than getting ahead. It was not that God needed some kind of dwelling, as the prophet Isaiah had pointed out years earlier.² Rather, the people needed God's presence among them for all the nations of the world to see. Rebuilding the temple would be a testimony to the Persian empire and God would be glorified. God has a passion for his glory, and he wanted Judah and his people to have the same passion at all times. He wanted them to be holy, different from all other nations—not profane and worldly. God's commands are often simple and straightforward, yet living with such simplicity demands profound spiritual changes in our hearts and our minds. (6–7)

Isaiah 66:1

 This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What is the house you will build for me? Where is the place where I will rest?"

The Sovereign LORD has always shown that he is in control of nature. In Leviticus, he stated that the earth would withhold its produce if the people were proud. In Haggai, God blew away their crops and called for drought. He wanted his people to know that he was responsible for their physical sufferings. The calamities of the land were a form of divine discipline in order that the people might recognize that all things came from the hand of God. Regardless of how hard they worked, God dictated the results. (8–11)

1. Isaiah 55:8–9

2. Isaiah 66:1; 2 Chronicles 6:18–21



Leviticus 26:19–20

I will break down your pride of power and make your sky like iron and your earth like bronze. Your strength will be spent in vain, because your land will not yield its produce and the trees of your land will not yield their fruit.

The People's Response – Haggai 1:12–15

The response of the people prompted God to give an *oracle of encouragement*, a positive prophecy which encouraged the people in their obedience. Haggai's message accomplished

its purpose, at least in their initial response. It brought the fear of God into the hearts of the people. It was God who was angry and displeased. They did not want to experience God's wrath anymore. They were ready to change and obey.

(12) Haggai wanted to make very clear that though this message was in his words, it was God's voice. This idea is the basis for the Christian doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. When we read the prophets or apostles proclaiming a message, that message has a divine origin, even though it is delivered through human lips. We must listen to it.

(13) The people were ready to work because they feared the LORD and recognized that he had been frustrating their plans. But if their intentions and actions were to be of long lasting effect, they needed divine encouragement. God's message was simply, *I am with you*. If God is with us, who could be against us?³ Time and time again, the Bible is emphatic about God's presence. It is a precious promise of which the people of God need to be reminded.⁴

Philippians 2:13

For it is God who works in you, both to will and to act according to his good pleasure.

(14–15) In verse 14, we read that God “stirred up their spirit.” The secret of their dedication was not so much the indispensable message of the prophet, but the LORD himself. God was with them, but not merely as a cheerleader. He was their spiritual power and strength as he had been when they had first returned from Babylon.⁵

3. Romans 8:31

4. Exodus 33:12–16; Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 28:18–20

5. Ezra 1:1; Ezra 1:5



Drought

The effects of drought are devastating to the land, economy, and population. Prolonged drought can cause erosion, disease, and an increased risk of fire. Farmers can go broke, prices rise, and inevitably disputes erupt over the little water that is available.

The Fear of the LORD

The fear of the LORD is a concept that describes the reverence of a servant who is eager to please and obey the Master. It is a holy awe, a terror resulting from understanding that the wrath of God is behind the people's calamities.

Inspiration

Evangelical Christianity affirms the biblical doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible as found in 2 Timothy 3:16. The Bible is inspired because it proceeds from the breath of God. It is *God-breathed*. The inspiration of Scripture is defined as *verbal* and *plenary*. That is, it extends to the very words and not just concepts or ideas. It also extends to every word in the original texts.

**Wine**

This image shows someone collecting wine from a winepress. Wine was an essential part of the culture in Old Testament times and if taken in moderation, God looked upon it with favor.

Jonathan Edwards

When God seeks his own glory, he is seeking the good of his creatures. God desires and delights in his own eternal glory and as it is radiated, it implies the happiness of his creatures. And in communicating his fullness for them, he does it for himself, because their good, which he seeks, is so much in union and communion with himself. God is their good. Their excellency and happiness is nothing but the emanation and expression of God's glory.

Adapted from *The End for Which God Created the World*, Jonathan Edwards, chapter 1, section iv, answer to objection 4.

Notice how Haggai changed the language he used (14–15) to describe the LORD. In the beginning, when the people were living in disobedience, God was merely described as *the LORD*. In this response, he is now described as “their God.”¹ No longer would God be alien and distant. He was the God that governed over heaven and earth, and now also governed over their hearts and desires. This ownership is always the result of obedience. We are God’s through obedience, holy reverence, and fear.

What is God saying?

Haggai’s first message is primarily concerned with the necessity to rebuild the temple. This however, is not a concern that has to do with the priority of a communal building in comparison to personal property. The emphasis about the temple is a disputation that shows the priority of God’s will and presence over material wealth and individual success.

Haggai makes a very important contribution to Old Testament theology. His concern was that postexilic Israel needed to submit to the sovereign will of the God. God’s people had not been asked if they would like to rebuild the temple. Haggai’s message confirms the centrality of God’s commands within the lives of his people.

The temple was the dwelling place of God in the midst of his people. In itself, it was just a building incapable of containing the glory of God.² But because of God’s command and desire, it was the designated holy place for God to meet with Israel, to dwell among them and to be worshiped and honored. Through the temple worship, he would bless them with peace and forgiveness. To neglect the temple was to neglect God’s very presence and communion. It denied God’s right to rule as king over the nation.

God says in Haggai: my presence, my glory, my kingdom, and communion with me are more important than any house or personal property or worldly success. I desire to be honored and treasured by my people among whom I dwell.

1. Haggai 1:12, 15

2. 1 Kings 8:27; Isaiah 66:1; 2 Chronicles 6:18–22

Excavate the Site

Haggai

Press on, God is with us

FIELD STUDY 3

Haggai 2:1–9

FIELD STUDY 3

How is the text arranged?

In this *Field Study*, we will examine Haggai's second message to the people of Judah. It comes just seven weeks after his first sermon and is an affirmation of the LORD's presence among his people. In order for us to understand this passage of Haggai and its relationship to the central message of the Bible, the gospel of Christ, we must first observe its structure and logic. Take a moment to become familiar with the organization of this sermon in Haggai.

Haggai 2:1–9

Section	Bible Text
Introduction	¹ On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet: ² Speak now to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people. Ask them,
The occasion	³ Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?
The divine encouragement	⁴ Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD, work. For I am with you, declares the Sovereign LORD. ⁵ This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Do not fear.

Sermon Introduction

Many Bible scholars begin this sermon with the phrase *In the second year of Darius* found in 1:15b. If left as part of the sermon in chapter 1, it would be dated twice while this sermon in chapter 2 would not include a reference to the year but only to the day and month. This seems to be the correct way to divide and structure the text. It is not a textual problem. The confusion arises out of the chapter and verse divisions which were added much later and are not part of the inspired original text.



people who were young children at the time of the Babylonian exile. They may have remembered the temple in its original glory and compared it to the depressing reality of the present situation. In any case, we observe that the people clearly perceived, even early into the project, that *their* efforts and resources would never be enough to restore the temple to its original glory. *Their* hard work could not equal the results accomplished by Solomon and the wealth of his kingdom, nor had they the aid of the skilled craftsmen that Solomon was able to hire from abroad.⁵

Zechariah 4:10

For who has despised the day of small things will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.

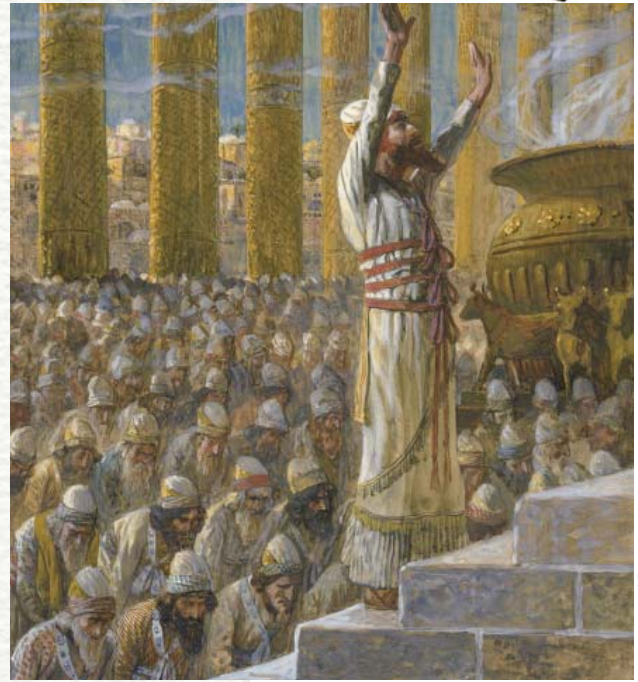
They were disillusioned, and their strength and enthusiasm were fading.

God sought

(4–5) to encourage his people by guiding them into the right attitudes and actions based on His word of promise. The prophet gave three commands to the leaders and all of the people. First, in spite of the circumstances, they should *be strong*. This command emphasized their attitude. The word describes a courageous demeanor, a frame of mind that allows a person to start and finish something with fervor and diligence. It is strength of character more than physical strength. The same words God promised to Joshua centuries earlier would have echoed in their ears:

Be strong and courageous, because you will give this people possession of the land I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law that Moses my servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

5. 2 Chronicles 2:1–16



James Jacques Joseph Tissot, 1896–1902

Solomon dedicates the Temple

After seven years of construction, King Solomon dedicated the temple to the LORD in 960 B.C. While it was Solomon's father David who originally wanted to build a house to the LORD, God assigned the task to Solomon who received much of David's riches, along with his own vast fortune to create one of the most beautiful and expensive structures ever built. Consider the details as recorded in 1 Kings 6–7 as well as 2 Chronicles 3–5.

Joshua 1:6–9

July

August

September

October

November

December 520 B.C.

29th Haggai's first message

21st The people's response

17th Haggai's second message

Haggai's third & fourth message 18th



to strengthen them and provide for their every need. He would not permit his cause to fail. He never will.

- (6) Haggai's sermon became more specific with respect to the way in which God would provide for all the necessary resources to finish the

Isaiah 60:5

When you will see and be radiant, you will be excited and your heart will swell with pride; the abundance of the seas will be brought to you, the wealth of the nations will come to you.

temple and restore its glory. A *shaking* would be initiated by God on a global scale.³ God's sovereignty would be expressed by using the treasure of all the nations for his own glory. This action was prophesied by Isaiah years earlier.

- (7–9) Even though the people were already discouraged because they were certain they would never be able to restore the temple to its original glory and magnificence, God proclaimed the exact opposite. Because the LORD Almighty was on their side strengthening them and providing the wealth for the temple, they could be sure that he would make it possible for the temple not only to be restored to its original beauty and glory, but in fact, to surpass it. The Second Temple would fulfill Isaiah's prophecy as the place where the LORD would grant peace to the nations.

In the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as highest of the mountains; it will be lifted up above the hills, and all nations will stream to it, and many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion will go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples; and they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they learn war anymore.

Isaiah 2:2–4

What is God saying?

Haggai's second sermon presents us with a divine message that has two major affirmations. First, we learn that the people of God often get discouraged while seeking to serve and obey him. Even though the

3. Jeremiah 4:24–26; Nahum 1:5

Language Note

In Hebrew, the idea of totality is expressed by using a pair of opposite terms, like *good and evil*. In verse 6 the prophet uses *heaven and earth* to express this idea of everything, *sea and land* to represent everywhere, and *the nations* to represent everyone.



Todd Bolan, www.BiblePlaces.com

**Gold for the Temple**

Gold was used to create plating inside and outside the temple. King Solomon used a great amount of gold on the original temple and, in the days of Jesus, Herod would plate so much of the temple in gold that it glowed when the sun reflected off of it.

remnant of Israel had just received the promise of God's presence to help them through the construction project, the current circumstances quickly took away their motivation and willingness to work. This is often the case both in Scripture and history.

However, alongside our first affirmation, we also learn about the character of God. He is not a God who quickly gets enraged against his people because of their discouragement or apathy. On the contrary, he graciously reaffirms his promises to his people and commands them to continue with courage and enthusiasm. Times were hard and the circumstances less than ideal, but God was with them and, in his sovereignty, he would provide them all things necessary for the completion of their divinely ordained task. God not only gives commands, he also provides the means to fulfill his will in and through the lives of his people.

Strengthened by the promise of God's presence and sovereign provision of all resources needed, the nation needed to continue working faithfully and without fear. God would provide all of the gold, silver, and necessary resources to restore the temple to its original beauty. He promised to shake the nations to strip them of their wealth so that with their desired treasures the glory of the temple would be restored. However, this prophecy was fulfilled in a gradual process that started with the provisions made by the rulers of the Persian empire.¹ Throughout the 400 years between the Old and New Testaments, many other additions and improvements were made to the temple. But it was only through the renovations made by Herod the Great in the days of Jesus that the Second Temple superseded the first. Financed by the Roman empire, it was expanded and richly adorned along with the entire Temple Mount complex and courtyards.² However, this was

Temple Treasures

Many of the items used for worship in the temple would be made from solid gold. This was to demonstrate the incredible worth of the Lord and express God's worthiness of worship.



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1. Ezra 6, 7:15

2. Mark 13:1

Excavate the Site

Haggai

The kingdom of God demands our holiness

FIELD STUDY 4

Haggai 2:10–23

FIELD STUDY 4

How is the text arranged?

We arrive now at the final *excavation site* in the prophecy of Haggai. This last exploration will lead us into an in-depth study of Haggai's final two sermons. Before we get into the particulars of our study, let us first see its structure and its logical argument. It can be outlined as follows:

Haggai 2:10–23

Section	Bible Text
Third Message – The Promise of Divine Blessing (2:10–19)	
The date	¹⁰ On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Haggai the prophet:
First case study: consecration	¹¹ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Ask the priests about the law: ¹² If a person carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and that fold touches some bread or stew, some wine, oil or other food, does it become holy? The priests answered, No.
Second case study: defilement	¹³ Then Haggai said, If a person who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches one of these things, does it become unclean? Yes, the priests replied, it becomes unclean.
The divine assessment of the nation	¹⁴ Then Haggai said, So it is with this people and this nation before me, declares the LORD. Whatever they do and whatever they offer there is unclean.



Priestly Garments

Priests wore the clothes specifically designated by God in Exodus 28:39–43. These garments were considered holy and consisted of a tunic or robe, a turban or head wrap, and a sash.

Todd Bolen, www.bibleplaces.com



A Vine of Grapes

The vine represented the best produce the land had to offer. Each year's harvest determined how much wine the people of Judah would have available for the rest of the year.

Section	Bible Text
The divine exhortation: first consideration	¹⁵ Now then, from this day on: Consider how things were before one stone was laid on another in the LORD's temple. ¹⁶ When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. When anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty. ¹⁷ I struck all the work of your hands with blasting wind, mildew and hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the LORD.
The divine exhortation: second consideration	¹⁸ Consider from this day on, from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, since the day when the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid. Consider: ¹⁹ Is there still any seed left in the barn? Until now, the vine and the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree have not yielded anything. But from this day on I will bless you.

Fourth Message – The Promise of Divine Servant/King (2:20–23)

The date	²⁰ The word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month:
The recipient	²¹ Tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah that
The announcement of future doom of the nations	I am about to shake the heavens and the earth. ²² I will overthrow royal thrones and shatter the strength of the foreign kingdoms. I will overthrow chariots and their drivers; horses and their riders will fall, everyone by the sword of his brother.
The messianic role of Zerubbabel's offspring.	²³ On that day, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will take you, Zerubbabel my servant, son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Sovereign LORD.

A Fig Tree

Figs were a common fruit native to the Mediterranean region and an important part of the people's diet. Most fig trees will yield a harvest twice each year.



Haggai's third sermon is a *didactic speech* that instructs the nation in purity of worship. It is similar to his first sermon in addressing the sins of the nation but goes on to promise God's blessing. Observe how in this speech, God teaches his people by reminding them about the law and its relationship to the nation's past. Just as a defiled person brings defilement to all things sacred, so the people of Judah had been

B.C. 600 590 580 570 560 550

605 Babylon first lays siege to Jerusalem

586 Babylon destroys Jerusalem
Second wave exiled

70 year exile in Babylon
605–535 B.C.

597 Babylon exiles first wave of people

582 Babylon exiles third wave of people



the blessings of the Davidic Covenant described in 2 Samuel 7. During the time of Haggai when the remnant was under Persian rule, such recognition was extremely important. It would restore hope to the nation. The future establishment of God's kingdom through the house of David would still be fulfilled because God was faithful.

It is through David and his descendants that God's kingdom over his people and the world would be established and consummated. The *Davidic line* is therefore of paramount importance in God's plan. If David's line were to be destroyed or conquered, Israel's future and God's kingdom would be at stake. In the history of Israel, God's mercies toward the entire nation were called the "faithful mercies shown to David."³ God promised, "I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations."⁴

What is the explanation?

Third Message – The Promise of Divine Blessing (2:10–19)

(10–11) The date was December 18th, 520 B.C., precisely three months since the people started working on the temple and two months since the previous sermon. Most importantly, this was the date that the foundation of the temple had been completed.⁵ God began his message without the usual address to Zerubbabel or Joshua. Rather, he poses a couple of questions about holiness that the people are to ask the priests. The priests were responsible for teaching the law to the nation, interpreting what was clean and unclean.⁶

(12) Holiness or consecration means to set something apart for cleanliness or purity. The first question Haggai asked was if holiness could be transferred. According to the Old Testament, there were occasions in which a sanctified person or object could transfer such status to another:

Exodus 29:21

When take some of the blood that is on the altar and some of the anointing oil and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments. Then he and his sons and their garments will be holy.

A holy meat would consecrate the garment in which it was carried, but

3. Isaiah 55:3

4. Psalm 89:4, 25–37

5. Haggai 2:18

6. Leviticus 10:8–11; Jeremiah 18:18; Ezekiel 22:26; Malachi 2:7–9



Exodus 29:37

Seven days you are to make atonement for the altar and consecrate it. Then the altar will be most holy. Whatever touches it will be holy.

What can be Holy?

In the Bible, many different things are referred to as *holy*. First, God himself is holy. Others could be holy including priests, a religious assembly or even the nation of Israel. Certain days and celebrations such as the Feast of Tabernacles were holy. Places like the temple, or objects like the ark of the covenant, or even certain foods, were all called holy.





Haggai's question was, could that garment then transfer holiness to a third object? The answer of the priests was emphatic, clear, and simple: *no*. Holiness does not come easy.

Haggai's first question builds a foundation for the second one. While holiness could not be transferred through a consecrated object, defilement could.¹ God's point shocked Haggai's audience. The corrupted nation still had not made things right before their God. In a sense, the unfinished temple was being compared with a dead body that was decaying. Work on the LORD's temple did not make an impure people clean. Religious activity does not make a person righteous. God punctuated the distance between himself and his people by referring to them as *this people* rather than *my people*. (13–14)

As in Haggai's first message, he would twice more challenge his audience to *consider*. First, they were to remember their plight before returning to the temple construction. Two specific examples are brought to their attention to remind them of their past economic distress. In the necessities of life, they reaped half of the grain and less than half of the wine that they had expected because God had *struck the work of their hands*. God had used his sovereign control over the elements in the same way he had in the book of Amos, causing economic distress in order to awaken the nation from their spiritual slumber. However, the people's hearts were hardened and they did not return to him. God's unbuilt house showed that he was an unwanted resident. Just like today, these people had a secular mindset that explained away the calamities of their day merely as natural disasters rather than recognizing it as God's hand of discipline. (15–17)

In ancient Judah, May through September was hot and dry. October and November generally provided some rain to allow crop planting for the following year before the cold weather hit. Haggai wanted the remnant to remember this date. It was December 18, the foundation of the temple had been completed, and the essential winter crops had already been planted. The date gave this declaration the formality of a legal document. Harvest was still several months away, but God promised a reversal of their agricultural failures. God's blessing was imminent. If they obeyed him and continued the work with courage, despite how things looked in the present, God would bring economic prosperity through agricultural blessing. (18–19)

1. Leviticus 11:28

March

April

May

June



A Pomegranate Tree

This delicious fruit is very common in the Mediterranean basin and another key component in the Jewish diet. The fruit was used in a variety of ways for cooking, drinking, and even making spices.

Amos 4:9

⦿ struck your many gardens and vineyards with scorching wind and mildew, the locusts devoured your fig and olive trees, yet you have not returned to me, declares the LORD.

Grain Seed

Farmers would hold back a portion of each harvest to use as seed for the next crop.



520 B.C. January

February



Fourth Message – The Promise of Divine Servant/King (2:20–23)

(20–22) Haggai's final message also occurred on December 18th, 520 B.C.

Addressed only to Zerubbabel, it was an *oracle of salvation* that related directly to the future of Israel and the nations of the world. God again announced that he would *shake the heavens and the earth*. This time he would not gather the riches of the nations, but discipline in judgment. The language is strong, as the LORD would act on the grandest scale to *shake, overthrow, and shatter*. It would bring the kingdoms of the nations to an end. Thrones would be overturned and the armies of the nations would be destroyed. The strength or might of Judah and its army had nothing to do with the fate of the nations described here. The nations would fall as the result of the direct action of the sovereign God.

(23) Life for those who returned from the exile was difficult.

Work on the temple was challenging and they felt small and insignificant.

While Zerubbabel was the descendent of David's kingly line, there was no throne for him to sit on, no crown to wear, and no kingdom to rule. However, a day was coming when God would reorder the kingdoms of the world. Again, God would act by *taking* Zerubbabel, which carries the idea of special election.² Zerubbabel had a very special role as the *servant* and the *chosen one* of God. When the judgment of the nations came, the LORD would make Zerubbabel like a signet ring. This image is extremely important to the meaning of Haggai's last message. The ring was now back on the hand of the Divine King of the universe to seal the fate of the nations.



2 Peter 3:10

But the day of the LORD will come like a thief, and the heavens will disappear with a roar; the heavenly bodies will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be burned up.

What is God saying?

The message of Haggai's Third Sermon

Now that we have finished digging into the meaning of the text, we are ready to consider the implications of our findings. In Haggai's third sermon, God wanted his people to understand that there is a relationship between holiness and blessing. Good works and busyness with respect to spiritual matters is not a guarantee to prosperity. The nation needed to understand that when they walked in ungodliness

2. Genesis 24:7; Exodus 6:7; Deuteronomy 4:20; Amos 7:15

Horses and Riders

Chariots and horses conjure up images of Pharaoh's army as they chased the Israelites to the Red Sea; however, there is another reference here. The Persian army was the first major force to extensively use cavalry in battle and therefore were well known for their horses and riders.

Parallel Promises

In the Davidic covenant, the son of David built God a house and the LORD in turn built a *house* to the family of David. In the same way here, Zerubbabel was to build the house of the LORD, and in turn God would establish Zerubbabel as the king to rule after all the other kingdoms of the earth had been subdued.

Ancient Chariot

Many armies saw chariots as integral for their battle plans. The military force of a nation was frequently symbolized by the chariots and their drivers. The Persians may have been the first army to yoke four horses to a single chariot. They also used chariots in large numbers along with cavalry.



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and disobedience, they would be judged and disciplined by God. There is a correlation between divine blessing and holy, heartfelt obedience. For this reason, God wanted to encourage them and give them hope. The harvest had not yet come, but with their new attitude and their desire to obey and walk in holiness, God promised to bless them and their coming harvest while the seed was still in the ground.

The message of Haggai's Fourth Sermon

In the fourth and last message, God spoke to Zerubbabel and gave him a promise of eternal implications. In the prophecy, God reminded Zerubbabel that he was the chosen sign of the Davidic kingdom. We must pause for a moment to reflect on the way this prophetic promise was fulfilled in history. The message of Haggai clearly addresses the specific man Zerubbabel. However, when we observe the history of Israel in the following years after the prophecy of Haggai and the governorship of Zerubbabel, it would seem evident that Zerubbabel disappears from the pages of history soon after Haggai's prophecy was proclaimed. The consummation of these words ultimately points beyond the person of Zerubbabel to the Messiah. He was the Son of David who would finally bring about the completion of God's promises in 2 Samuel 7. This way of speaking is frequently found in prophetic messages, particularly with respect to the promises of the Davidic covenant. Consider this example:

I will rescue my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will feed them and be their shepherd. I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.

Ezekiel 34:22–24

In this prophecy, Ezekiel proclaims another promise related to the Davidic covenant. The promise speaks of the person of David, and yet, David had been dead for several centuries. From this prophetic principle we can therefore affirm that, unbeknownst to Haggai, his message was ultimately not about Zerubbabel, but about his Davidic lineage.¹ The promise belonged to the Messiah who would come from the house of David. Both the promised glory of the temple, and the demise of the nations under the eternal kingdom of God would find their ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ.² He

1. Matthew 1:6–16; Luke 3:27

2. Luke 1:26–33, 67–75



Signet Ring

This is an example of an ancient signet ring from King Childeric I of the Merovingians. It is from the 5th century A.D. and was found in Childeric's tomb at Tournai. The inscription reads, *of Childeric the king and would have functioned in the same way as a signet ring in the days of Haggai.*

Signet Ring

Esther 8:2 presents another example of the significance of a signet ring. The king's right-hand man, Haman was executed after his evil plot against the Jews was exposed. The king took his signet ring from Haman and gave it to Mordecai. This signified the new place of influence and blessing that Mordecai now enjoyed within the Persian empire.

B.C. 600

550

500

450

400

350

586 Temple is destroyed

520 Prophecies of Haggai

445 Nehemiah rebuilds Jerusalem walls

516 Temple is completed

Analyze the Find

Haggai

Believers must be holy to enjoy God's eternal presence

FIELD STUDY 5

The Message

FIELD STUDY 5

What is the contribution to Scripture?

From Genesis to Haggai

We arrive now at the final stage of our exploration in Haggai where we will analyze and synthesize all of our findings. How does the book of Haggai contribute to the central message of the Bible and the consummation of God's plan of salvation through the Messiah, Jesus Christ? It is useful to think about Haggai in relationship to two themes: God's presence and God's kingdom. These two ideas are of monumental significance in the Bible, and Haggai reminds us of the crucial role of obedience and holiness in the provision of God's presence and the advancement of his kingdom.

Beginning in the Garden of Eden, God enjoyed fellowship with Adam and Eve, the crown of his creation.¹ This relationship was the climax of their daily experience; however, it was based on two conditions: holiness and obedience.² Adam and Eve's willful rebellion severed this relationship and God's immediate presence was lost.³ From that moment on, the story of Scripture follows a pattern of fleeing and pursuing as God makes a way for sinful mankind to be restored to fellowship through sacrifice and atonement. To this end, God chose Abraham and demanded of him the same basic expectations he had of Adam. Through Abraham and his descendents, God would provide

1. Genesis 3:8
2. Genesis 2:15–17
3. Genesis 3:1–7, 22–23



Jacob Savary, 1601

The Garden of Eden

The Garden of Eden where God placed Adam and Eve was a place of perfect tranquility and abundance. They enjoyed communion with their Creator until Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were banished from it forever.

Genesis 17:1

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless."



David Roberts, 1828

The Israelites Leave Egypt

It was not until the tenth plague, the plague of death, when Pharaoh finally let the Israelites go. The angel of death killed all the firstborn within Egypt including Pharaoh's eldest and even the firstborn cattle. However, the angel of death passed over the houses of the Israelites who had blood on their door posts from their sacrificial lambs. See Exodus 12:33–41 for more details.

a new way for all humanity to enjoy his glorious presence, mediated through holiness and obedience.¹

After several centuries the descendants of Abraham found themselves oppressed in slavery, but God fulfilled his promise to deliver them and make them into a great nation.² They became a nation like no other, where he *tabernacled* among them and they could approach him through the Mosaic Law and the sacrificial system.³ Eventually, the people of Israel settled in the Promised Land, but they forsook the presence of the LORD and demanded to be ruled by a human king:

When all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, just like all the other nations have. But this displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to lead us, so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel: Obey the voice of the people in all they are saying to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me as their king. Like all the deeds which they have done since the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now then, obey their voice, but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do.

1 Samuel 8:4–9

God's grace was present even in the midst of Israel's rebellion.⁴ Saul was anointed the first king of Israel, but he was a failure. God then appointed a man after his own heart named David, through whom he established a royal dynasty:⁵

When your days are complete and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my steadfast love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.

2 Samuel 7:12–16

1. Genesis 12:1–3; 20:1–7, 17
2. Genesis 15:12–16; Exodus 3:5–10
3. Exodus 25:1–9, 22; Deuteronomy 4:5–8, 32–40
4. 1 Samuel 12:6–25
5. 1 Samuel 13:13–14; 15:24–29; 16:1, 7–13

B.C. 2000

1850

1700

1550

1400

1250

2091 God's covenant with Abraham?

1925 God's covenant with Abraham?

1446 Exodus from Egypt?

Exodus from Egypt? 1260



Multiple Fulfillment

Many prophecies in the Old Testament are fulfilled first in history, only to be fulfilled again by Jesus in a spiritual way that was never imagined. Consider various examples and further study on multiple fulfillment in the *Toolbox* section at the back of this book.

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We saw his glory, the glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

All four Gospels record Jesus entering the Temple and overturning tables and driving out the animals and money changers. This is one of many occasions that Jesus was in the temple and shows the importance of the temple in worship and prayer.



itself, funded by the riches of the Persian empire.¹ However, biblical prophecy is often implemented gradually, in multiple fulfillments that come in stages. During Roman times, Herod the Great would fulfill Haggai's prophecy of making the Second Temple architecturally more glorious than Solomon's.² But the true glory of the LORD was present not in a building but in the presence of Son of God, Jesus Christ. He was and is the very substance of the glory of God.

Jesus: the eternal temple of God

If we read the Gospels and the portrait they present of Jesus Christ, we discover that Jesus replaces the edifice and becomes the true and most perfect temple of God. He is a temple that cannot be destroyed.³

In Old Testament times, the tabernacle and the temple were the place where God dwelled in the midst of his people to rule over them and bless them with his presence. Now the resting place of the glory of God is in Jesus, God's son. Again, Haggai's prophecies are fulfilled in more than one way. Observe how the *theology of the temple* is fulfilled by Jesus as the book of Revelation describes the New Jerusalem.

The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of jewel. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was of pure gold, transparent as glass. I did not see a temple in the city, because the temple is the LORD God Almighty and the Lamb. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

1. Ezra 6:8–12
2. Mark 13:1
3. Matthew 24

Hebrews 1:3

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, he upholds all things by his powerful word.

John 2:19–21

Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up... But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

Revelation 21:19–23

B.C. 650

575

500

425

350

275

586 Temple is destroyed

445 Nehemiah rebuilds Jerusalem walls

520 Prophecies of Haggai

516 Temple is completed

333 Alexander conquers Israel



After all the failures of the people of God, the great news of the gospel is that it is through Christ's holiness and obedience that we will be able to dwell in the blessed presence of our God forever. It is his perfect obedience and holiness that will ultimately establish the eternal Kingdom of God. The gospel is truly good news!

Jesus: Emmanuel, the presence of God with us

One last fulfillment of the prophecy of Haggai that we see completed in Jesus is the repeated promise, "I am with you."³ No gift of God is greater than that of his dwelling among his people. The Bible makes it clear that there is no other place where God's peace-giving presence is more glorious, or more complete, than in Jesus.⁴

Matthew 28:18–20

When Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always, to the end of the age."

What does God want?

The book of Haggai teaches us some important truths about God and his character. God is not distant but rather, he dwells among his people. Haggai points us to Jesus as the greatest evidence of God dwelling among the faithful. We need to remember these things:

- God desires communion with us. Any time we put anything else as a higher priority in our lives, we must remember the story of Haggai and the people of Judea. Discipline may come. Trials may come. God is a jealous God and wants us to value his presence.
- God is our king. Our lives, our thoughts, our actions, and our attitudes should manifest this reality.
- God demands our holiness and obedience so he can be near to us and bless us with his presence.
- The book of Haggai points us to Jesus Christ our Savior. It is in

3. Haggai 1:13, 2:4

4. Romans 8:32–39

Jesus' Genealogy

Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his ministry.

Jesus was the son, as was

supposed, of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa,

the son of Zerubbabel,

the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan,

the son of David,

Luke 3:23–31

275

200

125

50 B.C.

A.D. 25

100 A.D.

Antiochus defiles the temple 168

Herod begins temple improvements 20

Pompey defiles the temple 63

Herod completes temple improvements 63

30? Death and resurrection of Jesus

Romans destroy the temple 70



him that the glorious presence dwells in all its plenitude. For us to be near to God and to get close to his presence we must draw near to Christ. He is our Emmanuel.

- In union with Christ, we are now his body and the temple where God currently dwells. We ought to pursue holiness in all aspects of life.
- If God is with us, who can be against us?¹ In every project and mission we participate to further God's kingdom, he is our strength. No matter how difficult the circumstances may get, we must persevere with valor knowing God is for us and he will help us to the end.
- Jesus Christ is our model and our goal. Our aim is to be like him. Separated from him we cannot please God. We must seek to imitate his character, his holiness, and his obedience. If we are to dwell in God's presence forever, we must devote our time and energy to knowing and delighting in our Savior.

1. Romans 8:31



Discoveries

Now that we have completed the analysis of the book of Haggai, it is time to carefully examine what we have learned and the difference it can make in our lives.

Connecting with the community

Here are some discussion questions to help you better understand the text. Do not merely reflect on them as an individual, but rather think each of each question, when applicable, in terms of your family, your community, your nation, and your church.

1. What is the contribution of Haggai to the story of the Bible?
2. What was the most prominent sin of the Jewish nation in the times of Haggai? How was this sin manifested in daily actions and decisions? How is it manifested today?
3. What can we learn from Haggai's prophecy about Christ and the gospel?
4. How does Jesus Christ and the Church fulfill the prophecy in Haggai regarding the glory of the temple?
5. Haggai proclaims that God's presence and kingdom are to be the first priority of his people. Explain how these two divine realities are fulfilled in Christ. Support your answer with biblical references.
6. Go back through the book of Haggai and highlight the concepts of kingdom, presence, holiness, and obedience. What do these concepts teach us about the nature of God? Will the kingdom of God be established over all the nations in the future? Support your answer with Bible references.
7. Now that you have completed the entire prophecy of Haggai, what do you think Haggai wanted his audience to understand? What is the message that we are to understand today?

Notes, Observations & Questions



you creatively communicate God's message? Could you use a picture, a logo, a song, or a jingle? It is very important that you plan out your lesson. What concepts do you want your students to understand? What themes in Haggai will you teach? Once you are ready, try it out!

Observation journaling

Developing a habit of writing out what you have studied is a very helpful part of learning. Now, it is important for you to read Haggai in your own Bible and mark the key structures, terms, and meaning of each section. By transferring to your Bible what you have learned in this study, you will always be able to review what you have learned regarding the meaning of the text and its application. The process will also reinforce what you have learned. If you do not like to write in your Bible, create a piece of paper that you can insert and keep in your Bible. Consider the following practices anytime you read God's Word:

Before you read

Always work at linking information that you already know with what you are learning. Anytime you come to a passage, review the context, the author, and any other information you might already know to prepare your brain to learn more.

While you are reading

Every time you read the biblical text, mark the text with questions, key terms, notes, and structures. Keep in mind the guidelines on the art of active learning section, page xi at the beginning of your *Field Notes* to create a habit of active reading, learning and marking the text effectively.

After you have read

As soon as you have finished reading, write down any questions that you may have that were not answered in Haggai. Why do you think God left those questions unanswered? Are they answered in other parts of Scripture? Create a journal that records your thoughts about what you are learning. Be sure to continue to review and reread in order to master the material.

Notes, Observations & Questions