

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

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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.





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.

Iconostasis of Izhm monastery, Russia, 18th century

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.

Aydaraz, 2005

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.



The Proper Use of Old Testament Prophecies

Topic	Description
What is prophecy?	The word prophecy literally means <i>speak forth, announce, proclaim</i> . In prophecy, the primary medium is not the written word but the spoken word of the prophet.
The role of the prophet	A prophet is a person who <i>speaks for God</i>. While they sometimes predict future events, their ministry was essentially to act as God's emissaries and communicate his words to their generation. The ministry of a prophet had two important characteristics: 1. They spoke for God. This is the essential characteristic of prophetic speeches. The prophet always made sure the audience knew that his words were of divine origin by saying, "this is what the LORD says." In many cases, the message was delivered in first person, using "I" or "me" as if God himself was speaking. 2. They sought to enforce the covenant. Israel's law constituted a covenant between God and his people. The covenant contained regulations, promises and sanctions. Blessings and curses were included in the stipulations of the covenant. For this reason, the prophets function as enforcers of the covenant. The blessings and curses they proclaim were not new. They spoke reminders of the regulations of the covenant originally given during the receiving of the law.
Characteristics of Hebrew prophecy	Hebrew prophecy features several distinctive characteristics: 1. Covenant Language. The prophets often use language that points back to the covenant of the law with its blessings and curses. For this reason, their proclamation is usually spoken in the following terms: a. The <i>blessings</i> they proclaim fall in one of six categories: life, health, prosperity, agricultural abundance, respect, and safety. b. The <i>curses</i> they proclaim correspond to one of the following ten "d's": death, disease, drought, dearth, danger, destruction, defeat, deportation, destitution, and disgrace. 2. Historical Context. The prophets spoke at times when the nation was experiencing extreme conditions of social upheaval, religious unfaithfulness, and international power struggles. It is absolutely necessary to have a working knowledge of the particular events that lead to the proclamation of the prophecy, in order to grasp its relevance and significance in the context of the covenant described in Deuteronomy 4:25–31. 3. Oracles. The basic form of the prophetic speech was the <i>oracle</i>. Most prophetic books consist of a series of messages or oracles compiled into a book in an uninterrupted series without breaks or introductions. For this reason, it is important to recognize the different types of oracles so that their <i>boundaries</i> can be identified. Some oracles are dated or encased inside a historical framework. 4. The Particular Forms of Prophetic Speech. The most common forms of prophetic speech are: a. <i>The Lawsuit.</i> In this form, the message is proclaimed in a legal form with a summons, charge, evidence, and verdict. b. <i>The woe.</i> These are messages of impending doom with three major parts: the word woe, the reasons for distress, and the announcement of doom. c. <i>The promise or salvation oracle.</i> This is the opposite of the woe oracle. It announces the coming of new blessings with three elements: a reference to the future, mention of radical change, and a promise of blessing. d. <i>The enactment prophecy.</i> On many occasions, the words of the prophecy are "fleshed out" in the life of the prophet. He performs a series of symbolic actions that vividly present and reinforce the message. e. <i>The messenger speech.</i> This is the most common form of prophecy. In it, the prophet is a herald to the nation, proclaiming the words of God in the form of a speech or sermon. It usually begins with the phrase, "this is what the LORD says." 5. Poetry. Hebrew poetry was employed as an aid to memorization. The prophets often proclaim their messages in some form of poetic prose to help seal the message in the hearts of their hearers.

Adapted from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, chapter 10, *The Prophets: Enforcing the Covenant in Israel* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stewart, Zondervan, 2003

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500 B.C.

538 Cyrus' decree allowing Jews to return

520 Prophecies of Haggai

536 Temple rebuilding begins then stops

516 Temple is completed

538–535 First exiles return to Jerusalem

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.



Haggai 2:1-9

Section	Bible Text
The divine promise	⁶ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: In a little while I will once again shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. ⁷ I will shake all nations, and the treasures of all nations will come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Sovereign LORD. ⁸ The silver is mine and the gold is mine, declares the Sovereign LORD. ⁹ The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house, says the Sovereign LORD. And in this place I will give peace, declares the Sovereign LORD.

Second Temple

After the destruction of Solomon's temple by Babylon in 586 A.D., the temple of Jerusalem was initially rebuilt by Zerubbabel and Joshua from 520 B.C. to 516 B.C. This gave rise to what came to be known as the *Second Temple*. Over the centuries, the temple was embellished from time to time, particularly during the Hellenistic period. Herod the Great completely rebuilt it and remodel it later, beginning in the 15th or 18th year of his reign. The construction lasted 46 years. The entire temple expansion including the Temple Mount was not completed until around A.D. 62–64. In A.D. 70, on the ninth day of Ab, the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans.

This structure reveals that after just a short time of rebuilding the temple, discouragement once again surfaced in the community. According to verse 3, there were some who started to contrast this structure to the original temple built by Solomon. This Second Temple seemed *as nothing* compared to the glory of the original. Therefore, in this second section, God gave Haggai a message of encouragement for his people. They were to be strong and continue the work. They should not have been afraid, for God was with them. His Spirit remained among them to strengthen them. God also made them a promise: if they persevered and finished the work, he would be sure to provide all the materials needed throughout the project. But most importantly, he assured them that their work would not be in vain. In the end, this temple would be more glorious than Solomon's. They had to persevere. Peace and blessing would come as a result of their faithful and courageous work.

What is this passage saying?

What are the key terms?

Let us take some time now to observe in greater detail the language of this section of Haggai. This will help us to better understand its meaning and the reason for its importance. The following table includes some of the most important terms and phrases.

B.C. 600

590

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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.



Meaning of Key Terms

Key word or phrase	Meaning and significance
Glory (2:3, 7, 9)	The word glory comes from a Hebrew root that means <i>heaviness</i> . It describes an object of great weight and therefore great value. The word is also translated as <i>splendor</i> , describing the visible beauty or radiance of an object. Here, Haggai uses this word to affirm categorically that, through God's sovereign control of the universe and the nations, he would provide all the necessary resources to make the splendor and radiance of the Second Temple more astonishing than Solomon's Temple. The rebuilt temple would once again become a visible symbol of the greatness, the worthiness, and the <i>heaviness</i> of God.
Yet now (2:4)	This conjunction serves to emphasize that the situation is far from ideal, and therefore, they should listen to God's voice again. Haggai's last rhetorical question seems to imply that this Second Temple would not be as elegant and refined as the original. From this it would be easy to conclude that their discouragement was valid and there was no reason to put their hearts and souls into the project—that they should call it quits. However, Haggai's message moves in the opposite direction. In order to continue they were to find the strength in God.
For (2:4)	This preposition points to the reason and foundation of the divine commands. God doesn't require his people to act in obedience to his Word without a proper rational explanation. Haggai proceeded to give the nation a secure and certain foundation for the divine exhortation. No matter the personalities, strengths, weaknesses, gifts, or sins of every person in the community, not one of them would find sufficient reason to stop working on the rebuilding of the temple. No human reason will ever stand against the promise of God.
Shake (2:6, 7)	Haggai uses a vivid image to assure the nation that in the immediate future God would provide all the necessary materials to restore the glory of the temple. It would be as if God were shaking every nation, in fact the entire universe, so that they could give up their resources for the edification of God's temple. The nations had no choice or say in this.
Peace (2:9)	Haggai promised that God would restore peace to the nation through the new temple. However, in order for this to be done, they needed to be faithful to God's calling. They had to be strong and courageous and work diligently to accomplish the task. The promise of peace was true and secure, but it was conditional. Contrary to the false prophets, whose message was one of unconditional and almost "automatic" peace (see Jeremiah 7; 8:8–12) with no regard for the faithfulness of the nation to the divine covenant, a true prophet of God always emphasized the promise of everlasting peace in the context of covenant keeping.

Bible Interpretation

Haggai 2:6–9 must not be read in isolation from the entire message given by Haggai on this day. If done so, the interpretation will be faulty for it will give the appearance that these promises of God are unilateral and unconditional. When placed in the context of the entire sermon, you will see that they are in fact dependant on the obedience of the nation and their response to God's Word of encouragement and promise.

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500 B.C.

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Todd Bolin, www.BiblePlaces.com

Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths commemorated Israel's release from Egypt. For seven days people lived in temporary booths known as *Sukkot*, pictured above. Details of the yearly celebration can be found in Leviticus 23:33–44; Numbers 29:12–39; Deuteronomy 16:13–15 and Ezekiel 45:25.

What about the culture?

We celebrate many events throughout the year. Christmas is in December and Easter is in March or April. Just as we celebrate our holidays today, the Israelites in the time of Haggai also celebrated with feasts appointed to them by the LORD, through Moses. In Leviticus 23, the instructions for the Feast of Booths or Feast of Tabernacles were given to the Israelites.¹ This reminder of God's provision through the exodus became one of the most important and celebrated festivals on the Israelite calendar. It also served as a thanksgiving for the harvest.²

God's people were to stop work and live in temporary tents or booths for seven days in worship as a testimony to the greatness of the LORD for future generations. They were to sacrifice their comfortable homes as a reminder that God himself lived in a tent among them during the exodus.

Furthermore, Solomon had dedicated the original temple to the LORD during the Feast of Tabernacles.³ The people in the days of Haggai would have been reminded of this glorious festival in Israel's history that occurred 400 years earlier and would have remembered it as one of the greatest days in their nation's history. In fact, the first thing that the exiles did when returning from Babylon was to celebrate the Feast of Booths.⁴ All of these great memories from former celebrations surely added to their feelings of insignificance as they worked on a smaller, less glorious temple. The feast had begun on the 15th day of the 7th month on the Israelite calendar, and so Haggai's second message comes on the final day of the feast.

What is the explanation?

This second sermon was proclaimed on September 21, precisely 26 days after the people had resumed the re-building efforts. Already there was discouragement in the hearts of the people.

Haggai began his message by asking the leaders and the congregation (3) three questions comparing Solomon's Temple with their rebuilding efforts. These questions sought to address a sentiment that was already present in his hearers. There were among the remnant some elderly

1. Leviticus 23:33–44
2. Leviticus 23:39
3. 2 Chronicles 7:8–10; 1 Kings 8:1–66
4. Ezra 3:1–7

Haggai's Age

Some scholars speculate from verse 3 that Haggai might have been an older man who saw and remembered the majestic temple built by Solomon which was destroyed in 586 B.C. If so, then Haggai experienced both the entrance and the exit from exile and was an eyewitness to both temples.

520 B.C. January

February

March

April

May

June



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.

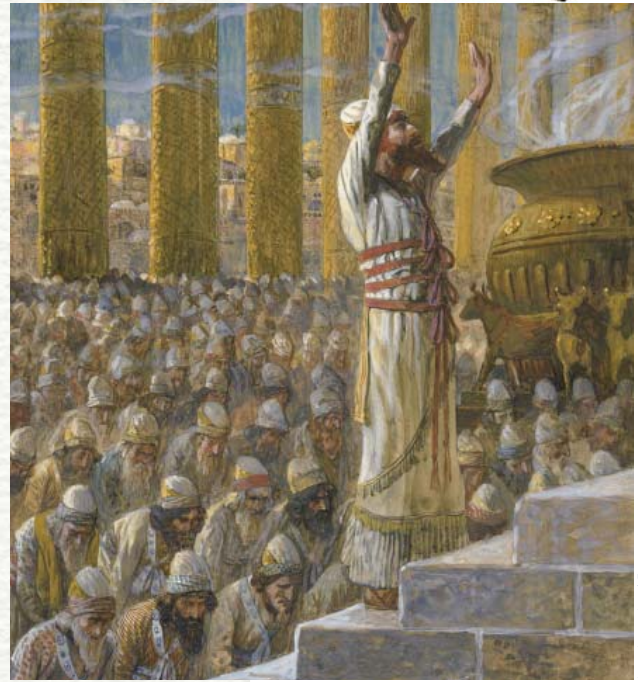
They were disillusioned, and their strength and enthusiasm were fading.

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



Just like the people in the days of Haggai, God commanded Joshua, Moses' successor, to be strong and courageous. The LORD God would be with him. David had the exact same words for Solomon when Solomon was to build the temple of the LORD:

Then David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and courageous and do the work. Do not be afraid or dismayed, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the LORD's temple is finished.

1 Chronicles 28:20

Whether leading the nation or building God's house, the LORD's commands are consistent: *Be strong and courageous for God is with you.* Strength is made evident by doing the work. This is the second command which emphasized action. Doing the work described the visible manifestation of a courageous attitude. The people were to work. Their strength of character would show in their persistence and commitment to finishing the rebuilding of the temple. (4-5)

The final exhortation, *do not fear*, focused again on a fundamental attitude. The command seeks to counteract the most basic obstacle against perseverance and courageous character: fear. If they were to remain working until the completion of the project, they had to conquer their fears. God plainly commands *do not fear*.¹ No matter their limitations, no matter the difficult economic times, no matter the enormity of the goal before them, they needed to persevere without fear.

Mark 6:50

Take courage!

It is I.

Do not be afraid.

Jesus' Presence

After Jesus' death and resurrection, he left his disciples with the great commission before ascending to heaven. He commanded his followers to go and make disciples and ended the command with the promise of his presence. "And surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

Once again, the people needed to hear the same promise and assurance God had given them a month earlier when they first started the work. The LORD Almighty was with them and his Spirit was among them. God's presence was meant to be the foundation of their courage and absence of fear just like it had been for Moses during the exodus.² God wanted them to remember that, from the beginnings of their nation, his presence had gone with them and stayed among them. All through Israel's history, God had been with them everywhere they went. He had never forsaken them, even through the seventy-year exile in Babylon. They were his chosen nation. He was with them

1. Genesis 15:1; 21:17; Exodus 14:13; Joshua 8:1; 1 Chronicles 28:20; 2 Chronicles 20:17; 32:7

2. Exodus 19:18; 33:14



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.

**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.



1. Ezra 6, 7:15
2. Mark 13:1



Discoveries

Now that you have completed your second excavation into the ancient riches of God's Word found in Haggai, it's time to sift through your *Discoveries* and see what you have learned. Find the questions that are most helpful for you and your group.

Connecting with the community

These discussion questions will help you to better understand the text. When applicable, consider each of these questions in terms of yourself, your family, your community, your nation, and your church.

1. Haggai chapter 2 begins with another reference to the date. Why might this date be significant to the people?
2. Would it have been possible for anyone in Haggai's audience to remember the original temple? Is Haggai's question in verse 3 rhetorical? Why or why not?
3. Compare and contrast Solomon's temple with the Second Temple built by the remnant. How are they alike? How are they different?
4. In Ezra 3:12–13, we read that the old men wept when they saw the new temple. How would you have felt if you had seen Solomon's temple destroyed and then saw the humbleness of the new one?
5. What does God's exhortation to his people to be strong and work tell you about what God wants for us?
6. How did God assure his people of his presence in Haggai 2? What was the guarantee of his faithfulness to them? What is the guarantee of his faithfulness to us today?
7. Read Exodus 29:45–46; 33:14, Numbers 11:16–17, 25 and Isaiah 63:11. Why was the assurance of God's presence an essential element of the covenant that he made with his people?

Notes, Observations & Questions



Notes, Observations & Questions

8. What does this section of Haggai teach us about the character of God? What does God reveal about himself that we must know?
9. How is God's promise to *shake the earth* fulfilled? How does it relate to the building of the temple?
10. How would God fill the temple with glory? What is his glory?
11. Why did God say that the glory of the next temple would be greater than the former, if the former was Solomon's magnificent temple?
12. God declares his temple as a place where there will be peace. How can this encourage us when times are difficult and we can't see the good in our situation?

Probing deeper

These exercises are for your continued study of Scripture and go beyond the text of Haggai to explore its themes across the Bible.

Divine Strength in the Bible

Section	Passage
Old Testament law and history	Read the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. Cain was discouraged when God rejected his sacrifice. How did God respond to his discouragement? What relationship existed between Cain's disappointment and his anger? How did Cain respond to the divine exhortation? What was the end of this story?
	Study the story of Abram and Sarah in Genesis 15–16. This is the second time God promises his blessings to Abram. Notice Abram's discouragement in 15:1–3. Why was he discouraged? How did God respond to Abram in 15:4–19? What happens in 16:1? Was there discouragement again? What was the solution proposed by Sarai to Abram? How old was Abram in 16:16? What was the divine solution provided by God in chapter 17?
	Read the story of Israel's crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 13:17–15:18. How do the people feel in 14:10–12? What is God's response in 14:13–16? How is this similar to Haggai 2:4? How important are God's presence and promises in Exodus 14 and 15? How does this compare to Haggai 2:5?



Divine Strength in the Bible

Section	Passage
	Read the story of the exploration of the land of Canaan by the spies of Israel in Numbers 13–14:36. What happens after the spies visit Canaan? If this was to be the result of the visit, why do you believe God asked Moses to send the spies? What is the cause of the discouragement of the people of Israel according to 13:25–29 and 14:1–4? How do you explain this? What is the response of Joshua and Caleb in 14:5–9? How does this compare to Haggai 2:1–9? How severe was God's judgment against this generation according to Numbers 14:10–38 and why?
	Study the story of the second exploration of Canaan under Joshua in Joshua 2. How is this story different from the story of Numbers 13–14? How do you see God's grace towards his people in the words of Rahab in Joshua 2:8–13? Why is there no discouragement in the spies this time? Where is their trust according to 2:14? How important was the assurance of God's presence to the leadership of Joshua and the entire nation according to Joshua 3:7–11?
	Meditate on the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 18–19. How can a servant of God suddenly feel discouragement in his or her ministry? How does this discouragement manifest itself? What is God's response to the discouragement of Elijah? How does God encourage Elijah in the midst of his sadness and fear?
	Study the story of Hezekiah and Sennacherib in 2 Kings 18. Describe the situation that was bringing tension upon the nation of Israel. Why were they going through this trial according to verse 12? What was Sennacherib's strategy to discourage the nation according to verses 19–35? Now read chapter 19. How is Hezekiah an example of what God asks of Israel in Haggai 2:4–5?
Old Testament poetry	Meditate on Psalm 73. Describe the reason behind the discouragement of the songwriter in verses 1–14? How reasonable was the feeling of the psalmist according to verses 21–22? What was the solution that the psalmist needed according to verses 17, 23–28? How does this exemplify what Haggai proclaims in 2:4–5?
	Read Psalms 88 and 89 and prayerfully meditate on them. How are they an example of spiritual discouragement? What hope is found for such depression according to Psalm 89? How do these psalms correlate to the teachings of Haggai 2:1–9? Create a table comparing similar features.

Notes, Observations & Questions



Notes, Observations & Questions

Divine Strength in the Bible

Section	Passage
Old Testament prophets	Read Jeremiah 20. Jeremiah was called by God to rebuke the people of Israel during its most rebellious times. How was Jeremiah treated because of his proclamation of the Word of God according to 20:1–6? How did Jeremiah feel as a result of this treatment (20:7–10)? What was the foundation for his perseverance and his strength according to verses 9, 10–13? Does perseverance imply that the future will be easier (see verses 14–18)? Can disappointment reoccur in the life of the believer?
The Gospels and Church history	Memorize Matthew 11:28–29. How is this passage from the Gospels related to the message of Haggai 2:1–9?
	Read Acts 4. This is an example of a situation that could potentially turn into disappointment and spiritual discouragement. What happened to the apostles as a result of their proclamation of the gospel in 4:1–21? What was the response of the disciples according to 4:21–31? How is this example of the promised spiritual strength related to Haggai 2:5?
New Testament letters	Read the introduction to 2 Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 1:3–11. Describe the general mood of the passage. How had life been for Paul and Timothy in recent times? If you take God out of the picture, how would you describe the state of their soul and the possible outcome of their experiences? What was their source of strength in such times of trial according to verses 8–10? How were their circumstances and their attitude related to the message of Haggai 2:1–9? What can you learn from their experience?
	Read Paul's farewell comments to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1–17. Make a list of the exhortations Paul gives to Timothy. Had Paul's ministry been easy? How did Paul experience disappointment in his life, ministry, and relationships? Can you relate to his experience? If so, how? What is Paul's consolation, encouragement and hope throughout the trials of life according to verses 8 and 17? How does this relate to Haggai 2:4–5?

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



unclean before God and defiled everything they touched. However, God wanted to make sure they understood that he would bless them because of his faithfulness to the covenant.

The fourth sermon is an *oracle of salvation* where Haggai directly addresses Zerubbabel and the future of Israel. Essential to their national identity was a king from the line of David who would rule and in whose time all the heathen nations would be shaken again. This shaking was not in order to seize their riches as was the case in the second sermon, but in order to punish their wickedness and unbelief. This small remnant had much to hope for. God was not finished with them. Their sins had been forgiven. They still had work to do.

What is this passage saying?

What are the key terms?

Let us observe in greater detail some of the key phrases and terms that carry the meaning and significance of this section of Haggai.

Meaning of Key Terms

Key word or phrase	Meaning and significance
Third Message	
Holy meat (2:11)	The holy meat came from some of the ritual sacrifices first described and instituted in the book of Leviticus. It was meat that had been given in sacrifice on the altar of the LORD but not consumed and therefore consecrated or <i>holy</i> .
Blasting wind, mildew, hail (2:17)	These words describe some of the natural events that the LORD had caused over the years to decimate the crops. These were covenant curses according to Deuteronomy 28:22. At times they had seen <i>blasting wind</i> , a strong and extremely hot wind normally from the west, which had the capacity of burning the crops. At other times <i>mildew</i> , a disease on the plants caused by excessive moisture, had destroyed the harvest. They had also seen <i>hail</i> destroy the efforts of many months of difficult labor.
Fourth Message	
On that day (2:23)	The events described in verses 21–22 are set to occur <i>on that day</i> . The Bible uses this language frequently in the books of prophecy to refer to the time when God will intervene in the affairs of history to bring justice and judgment upon the nations of the world. On that <i>day</i> he will act on behalf of his people and for the sake of his eternal plan and kingdom. In other places in the Scripture this event is usually called the <i>day of the LORD</i> .



An Olive Tree

While olives were a part of the Jewish diet, the olive tree was more critical for the oil produced from it. Olive oil served many purposes in the Ancient Near East including being used for cooking, medicine, and fuel for lamps.

Altar Sacrifices

The sanctity of meat offerings was so valuable that God commanded if anyone unclean ate it, that person should be “cut off from his people” (Leviticus 7:20). This probably meant that they should be isolated or even killed as a punishment. God’s holiness must not be taken lightly. Anything consecrated to him bears the marks of his holiness and must never come in contact with anything defiled or sinful.

Day of the LORD

For further study on the day of the LORD consult the chart in the *Toolbox* at the back of this book.

550

540

530

520

510

500 B.C.

538 Cyrus' decree allowing Jews to return

520 Prophecies of Haggai

536 Temple rebuilding begins then stops

516 Temple is completed

538–535 First exiles return to Jerusalem



Meaning of Key Terms

Key word or phrase	Meaning and significance
My servant (2:23)	God calls Zerubbabel <i>my servant</i> . There is significance to this title at several levels. First, this title was used to describe a person who was always a close collaborator with the king—a person that enjoyed a special relationship and bond with his master. Patriarchs, prophets, and kings were all designated as <i>servants</i> of God. The LORD described both Abraham, in Genesis 26:24, and Moses, in Numbers 12:7, as <i>my servant</i> . But the most special, prominent, and repetitive usage of this title relates to King David (2 Samuel 7:5, 8; 1 Kings 11:34; Psalm 78:70; Ezekiel 34:23; 37:24). It was the designation used for David when God entered into a covenant with him. David was <i>the</i> chosen servant of God who had been set apart and chosen to rule over God's people and establish God's kingdom in righteousness and peace.
Declares the LORD of Hosts (2:23)	This phrase emphasizes the divine nature of this promise. These words, although proclaimed by Haggai were not given by his own authority. Three times the verse declares that it is the LORD who is making these prophetic affirmations and promises. The fate of the nations and the role of Zerubbabel were sovereignly determined by the LORD of Hosts, the one true God.
Signet ring (2:23)	A signet ring was the emblem of the authority of kings. The king would wear it on his finger or sometimes hang it from his neck. He would use it to <i>sign</i> or authenticate a document as legally valid, carrying the message and authority of the king himself.

What about the culture?

The royal character of Zerubbabel was previously alluded to in his identification as the *servant* of the LORD. In the fourth message, we find another clue to the royal function of Zerubbabel in the imminent future of Israel. Zerubbabel was to become the royal sign or symbol of God's authority and kingdom.

Zerubbabel was the grandson of King Jehoiachin, the last king of Judah, before the people were taken captive by the Babylonians.¹ During the times of the prophet Jeremiah, Zerubbabel's grandfather, Jehoiachin, had also been described as a *signet ring* but in his case, he was like a signet ring that had been rejected, removed from the hand of the king and disposed of authority.² Zerubbabel was now the symbol of the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. Zerubbabel, as God's chosen, had the right to the throne of David and therefore, to

1. 2 Kings 24:6–17
2. Jeremiah 22:24

Zerubbabel

This is a depiction of Zerubbabel from *Promptuarii Iconum Insigniorum*—a collection of short biographies of historical figures with fanciful portraits in the form of coins, published by Guillaume Rouillé in Lyon, France in 1553.



Guillaume Rouillé, 1518–1589

520 B.C. January

February

March

April

May

June



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.



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:

Then 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



Throughout the Old Testament, God pursued mankind as he established his kingdom. David's son, Solomon, built the temple as God's permanent dwelling place.⁶ However Solomon disobeyed God, and Israel found itself in the midst of a civil war.⁷ The nation split, and after four centuries of sin and disobedience, found itself in captivity.

Jeremiah 25:8–11

Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: Because you have not obeyed my words, I will send for all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, declares the LORD, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting desolation. I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the grinding of millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

The hope of God's presence and kingdom seemed to be lost. The nation was now dispersed, the temple destroyed, and God's glory had left.⁸ However, the biblical story changes from utter despair into a glorious expectation. God had not rejected his people forever, and his glory would be revealed again.⁹ A remnant of those who went into exile returned to the Promised Land. God's promises to Abraham and David were still standing.

The Contribution of Haggai

The book of Haggai continues the divine story after 70 years of exile, as God again pursued his people, wanting to live among them in the rebuilt temple. The nation however, was neglecting God in disobedience. Although Israel was back in the land, the temple lay in ruins and the people were busy beautifying their homes. They worked countless hours, and yet the harvest was poor, the economy was down, and they were apathetic about their spiritual condition.¹⁰

In chapter one, Haggai's message was simple: the nation was suffering because they disobeyed God and once again rebelled against his rule over them. If they were to experience blessing, they needed God in

- 6. 2 Chronicles 6
- 7. 1 Kings 11–12
- 8. Ezekiel 10; 13
- 9. Jeremiah 29:10–14; Ezekiel 43
- 10. Haggai 1:1–11

Hope amid Exile

God's grace and love for his people was sure to give them hope even during the years of the exile. 2 Kings 25:27–30 ends its story of the captivity on a hopeful note. After 37 years of exile, Jehoiachin king of Judah was *graciously freed* by Nebuchadnezzar's son in 561 B.C. From then on, he sat at the king's table. Even in punishment, God wanted his people to know his kingdom through the line of David would be restored. It culminated in Jesus, the Son of David.

Isaiah 40:1–2

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her warfare has ended, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

1250

1100

950

800

650

500 B.C.

1050 Saul becomes king

930 The kingdom divides

722 Northern kingdom falls to Assyria

1010 David becomes king

Babylon destroys the temple 586

971 Solomon becomes king

Cyrus' decree allowing the Jews to return 538



Jean Fouquet, 1470

Pompey in the Temple

In 63 B.C. Pompey intervened in the civil war that was going on in Judea. According to Josephus, Pompey and many of his men entered the temple and even the Holy of Holies, defiling it as Gentiles. However, they took nothing, and Pompey told those in charge of the temple to cleanse it after they left.

A Model of Herod's Temple

Herod began a massive expansion and reconstruction project on the temple area in 16 B.C. Along with greatly enhancing the temple structure, Herod leveled the top of Mount Moriah, building massive retaining walls and creating a giant square platform known as the Temple Mount. He also added the various buildings and structures around the temple including the Royal Colonnade, the Portico, some of the outer courts, and even military barracks known as the Antonia Fortress.

their midst. God sent a simple message: *Build the temple!* They had to stop worrying about their own homes and focus on God's. The second part of Haggai 1 shows us the response of God's people: they feared the LORD and started to work on the temple. As soon as they took their first steps in obedience, God responded, *I am with you.* The nation had hope because God was once again with them.

Haggai's second message sought to reinforce his exhortation to rebuild the temple.¹ The people of the land thought their resources were meager and their efforts would not amount to much. Discouragement was settling in, but God wanted them to know that this was *his* project. His sovereign dominion over all nations guaranteed their success. The glory of this temple would surpass that of Solomon's. However, in Haggai's third sermon, God added clarification. It was not merely action that he was looking for, but holiness. God would not dwell among an unclean people, and without his presence, there would be no blessing.

Finally, Haggai's last message brings us back to the concept of kingdom. God not only promised to dwell among the people but through David's descendant, Zerubbabel, he also promised to bring about the consummation of his kingdom over all the nations of the world.²

The joy of God's presence and the glory of God's eternal kingdom was still tied to the holiness and obedience of God's people. His people continued to have an important and submissive role. They had to walk in holiness. They had to pursue obedience. If they did, the glory of God would dwell among them. His kingdom would be established forever.



Berthold Werner, 2008

1. Haggai 2:1–9
2. Haggai 2:20–23

B.C. 650

575

500

425

350

275

586 Temple is destroyed

445 Nehemiah rebuilds Jerusalem walls

520 Prophecies of Haggai

333 Alexander conquers Israel

516 Temple is completed



How did it end?

For almost four months in the year 520 B.C., Haggai exhorted the nation to rebuild the temple. The people did, and the temple was completed on March 12, 516 B.C., roughly 70 years after the Babylonians had destroyed it.³ The people celebrated the dedication of the Second Temple with a great sacrifice to the LORD. However, this temple was smaller and far less glorious than Solomon's original structure. Furthermore, the Bible never mentions God's glory filling this temple nor is there any mentioned the ark of the covenant of the LORD being present.

This Second Temple withstood both attacks and embellishments during the years between the Old and New Testaments. In 168 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes defiled the temple and Pompey defiled it again in 63 B.C., yet neither died from entering the Most Holy place. Herod the Great began a major temple renovation around 20 B.C. While he spent the first 18 months expanding and enriching the temple itself, he spent decades developing the Temple Mount and the outer court complex. In fulfillment of the word of Haggai, the riches that the Roman empire had gathered from the nations funded this project which was not completed until A.D. 63. This was the temple that Jesus cleansed and where the veil was ripped in two at Jesus' death revealing the Most Holy place. God's presence was no longer represented by the temple but rather by Christ himself. In A.D. 70 the Roman general Titus seized Jerusalem, killed thousands, and destroyed the temple.

What does this have to do with Jesus?

Let us consider now the relationship of Haggai's prophecy to the central theme of the Bible: the gospel of Jesus Christ. Here are some ways the book of Haggai points us to the glorious message of salvation through Jesus.

Jesus: the glory of the temple

Haggai's emphasis on the blessing of God's presence in the midst of his people finds its consummation in the person of Jesus. For this reason, one of the most important themes of the book of Haggai relates to the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. The temple was the central element of hope for the dwelling of God's glory among his people. The initial fulfillment of this prophecy was related to the structure



The Arch of Titus

This scene is from the Arch of Titus in Rome. It commemorates the Romans destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It shows the Romans carrying off the treasures from the temple including the menorah or candelabra.

The Destruction of Jerusalem

Roman soldiers lit some buildings adjacent to the Temple complex and much of the city was burned to the ground. According to Josephus, the Roman army killed everyone in their path and left the city completely decimated.



3. Ezra 6:13–18

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



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.

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.

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 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: 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

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.

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.

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.

Revelation 21:19–23

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



Carl Heinrich Bloch, 1895

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



Our LORD Jesus Christ is the most glorious place of God's presence and blessing to all the peoples of the earth.

The body of Christ, the Church universal, as the living temple

Today, the people of God await the return of Jesus as Savior, Judge, and King. He is physically absent from us. However, it is our eager expectation to be in the presence of our Savior.⁴ In the mean time, it is the Church, the body of Christ, which is to be the dwelling place of the glory of God on earth. The glory of Zerubbabel's temple, the glory of God, must shine through the church in this age:

Ephesians 2:19–22

So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the LORD. And in him you too are being built together into a dwelling place of God by his Spirit.

Did you recognize in these texts that holiness is a prerequisite to God's presence? The word of God is amazingly consistent. Even in this age, God's presence in his *temple*, the church, is still predicated on the holiness of the body of Christ. This emphasis is actually extended to every member of the church.

Jesus: the Son of David, the Messiah King

Haggai's emphasis on the future consummation of God's kingdom through Zerubbabel also finds its fulfillment in the person of Jesus. Jesus was of the royal lineage of Zerubbabel and therefore of David. When the angel Gabriel announced his birth to Mary, he included in the description of Jesus, his messianic character and royal right to the eternal kingdom promised by God to his father David:

Luke 1:30–33

The angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The LORD God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end.

4. 2 Corinthians 5:6–7

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

Hebrews

The book of Hebrews gives us an inspired defense of the supremacy and excellency of Jesus when he is compared to the spiritual realities revealed in the Old Testament. Christ is greater than the angels (1:1–18), Moses (3:1–6), and any high priest (4:14–5:10). In him we enjoy a better covenant (8:1–13), mediated upon a better priesthood (7:11–28). Lastly, his sacrifice is infinitely more glorious and efficacious than that of any lamb or ram (9:11–28). Thus, we must never quit in the battle of faith. How could we, having such great salvation in Him (2:1–18)?

1 Corinthians 3:16–17

Don't you know that you [plural] are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you [plural]? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is holy, and you [plural] are that temple.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.