

Seeking My King & His Kingdom
#33 What Time Is It?

Commitment to the task begins with joy and zeal for God. Then a little opposition or rejection comes my way. Perhaps God fails to bless me in the way and within the time frame I expected. I thought life would be better. I become more and more self-absorbed, less and less active in the things of God. I become disillusioned and bitter. I lack endurance.

Have I pinned my hopes on temporary things instead of eternal realities?

Discouragement can be a red flag to pause and consider my priorities.

It doesn't take long for zeal to cool and God's people to grow apathetic, especially when opposition that began as an ominous growl becomes a roar. The shout awakened the enemies of the Jews, aroused official opposition and caused the work to stop.

The Temple lay unfinished for 16 years from 536 to 520 BC.

God sent 2 prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to move the people's hearts to finish the task.

Consider Your Ways:

1. The Temple is in ruins.
2. You are neglecting the worship of God.
3. Your priorities are misplaced. You have drifted from the truth that God is first.
4. Your ways are an embarrassment to God and a blemish on His reputation.

Haggai's message was blunt. He pulled no punches and wasted no words.

Haggai spoke like a foreman on a construction project.

With a hardhat and tool belt, walking around the construction site, he bellowed out orders.

Message #1 includes 4 admonitions to encourage them to get back to work and finish rebuilding the Temple. It is August 29, 520 BC

A. Put God First In Your Life [1:1-4]

He exposes the hypocrisy and unbelief

Haggai 1:2-4 *"Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: 'This people says,*

"The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.""

Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"

1. Excuses - Defending Our Inactivity

They intended to build God's house, but just hadn't got around to it yet. If you were to ask them about it, they would say, "I'm all for building the Temple. It is a great cause.

But we need to take care of our own families first. Times are hard. Jobs are scarce.

We need to pray about it some more. We will eventually build it, but not now."

It is always easy to make excuses when you don't want to obey God. We can always find rational justification for not doing what God wants us to do: The time is not right.

The first step to putting first things first is to Admit Our Responsibility.

2. Evidence - How could they doubt it was God's will for them to build the temple and restore worship? God moved Cyrus to commission them to return. He gave them money and materials.

So why did they refuse to obey and build God's house? Isaiah and Jeremiah had predicted a national restoration that would amaze the Gentile nations and bring glory to Israel.

[Isa. 2:1-5, 11, 35; 60:1-5; Jer. 30-31] That wonderful anticipated event had not occurred! They did not understand that some promises will be fulfilled in the end times. By stopping the work, the Jews were admitting they had no faith in God's Word or in God's power to perform it. [Promise: Phil. 1:6] When their circumstances became worse due to the enemy, they doubted God and the dependability of His Word. [Prov. 30:5; 3:5-6]

3. Cease Being Selfish

Closely aligned with excuse making is a selfish mindset that permeates everything. Haggai challenged the people's selfish behavior. "Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?" Paneled houses represented the finishing touches. Their homes were not "in process." No weeds were growing around their unfinished foundations. Their homes were complete while the Temple remained nonexistent.

Consider: If I give no thought to how I am living, I will naturally live for myself.

The bent of our hearts is always toward selfishness. Like William Cowper, the hymn writer and pastor, penned: "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love."

That is what happens when we don't persistently and consistently seek God first.

B. Believe God's Promises

Haggai 1:5-6;9 Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!

⁶ "You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough;

You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;

And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes." "You looked for much,

but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the LORD of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house.

a. Consider your ways - give careful thought to

b. You are focused on the things you choose instead of your spiritual life.

c. Your own efforts and strength are in vain.

God repeatedly tells the people: "Consider your ways."

1. Set your heart; fix your attention on this

Do I spend frequent time alone before God, in the Word and in prayer (Matt. 4:1-11)?

Do I immediately confess any known sin and turn from it in genuine repentance, without blaming or excuses (1 John 1:9)?

Do I build into my life protection and accountability in order not to make any provision for the sins that so easily entangle me (Rom. 13:14; Heb. 12:1-2; James 5:16)?

Do I memorize and meditate on Scriptures that will keep me from temptation and sin (Ps. 119:9, 11)?

Is my love for Jesus Christ fervent and vital because I think often on what He did for me on the cross (Gal. 2:20; Rev. 2:4)?

Ps. 139:23-24 "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way"

C. Honor God's Name

Haggai 1:7-8 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!"⁸ Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD. When God is not first we are indifferent to His glory—His fame and His reputation being spread. The chief business of every Christian is to bring glory to God.

D. Obey God's Commands

When God speaks to us by His Word, there's only one acceptable response, and that's obedience. We don't weigh the options, we don't examine the alternatives, and we don't negotiate the terms.

Haggai 1:12-15 all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the LORD.¹³ Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, spoke the LORD's message to the people, saying, "I am with you, says the LORD."¹⁴ So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel... the spirit of Joshua... and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,

Haggai 2: KEEPING THE WORK ALIVE

The rebuilding of the temple was a very special task, for it meant the restoring of true worship in Jerusalem; and completing the project would please the Lord and be a great testimony to the unbelieving nations who were watching the remnant in Jerusalem. Haggai delivered three more brief messages to encourage the laborers to complete their assignments. In each message, he asked them to look in a specific direction to learn what God wanted them to learn.

A. Message #2: "Look Up: God Is with Us" (2:1-9) It is Oct. 17, 520 BC

When the foundation of the temple had been laid sixteen years before, some of the older men had looked back in sorrow as they remembered the glory and beauty of Solomon's temple (Ezra 3:8-13). He rejoiced that the work had begun, and he wanted to see it completed.

1. Discouragement (vv. 1-3). Rather than ignore the problem of discouragement that was sure to come when the people contrasted the two temples, the prophet faced the problem head-on. He picked an important day on which to deliver his message: October 17, 520 BC, the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast was devoted to praising God for the harvest, remembering Israel's pilgrim days in the wilderness, and looked forward to the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ. (Lev. 23:34-43).

The same ministry would be performed at its altars and the same worship presented to the Lord. Times change, but ministry goes on.

2. Encouragement: God's Presence (2:4-9)

But now take courage, Zerubbabel,' declares the LORD, '*Take Courage [Be strong] also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land take courage,*' declares the LORD, '*and work; for I am with you,*' declares the LORD of hosts.

3. Encouragement: God's Covenant (v. 5). The promise of God's presence with His people is guaranteed by His unchanging Word (v. 5). The prophet Zechariah, who ministered with Haggai, also emphasized the importance of trusting the Holy Spirit for the enablement needed to do God's will: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

4. Encouragement: God's Promise (vv. 6-7, 9).

For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.'⁷ I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. 'The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts, 'and in this place I will give peace,' declares the LORD of hosts."

With prophetic insight, Haggai looked ahead to the time when the Son of God would minister in this temple and bring the glory of God into its precincts (John 1:14). Certainly the glory that Jesus brought into that temple was greater than the glory of the tabernacle or the temple Solomon built. Then Haggai looked even further into the future and saw the end of the ages, when God would shake the nations and Jesus would return (Hag. 2:7). This verse is quoted in Hebrews 12:26-27 and applied to the return of Christ at the end of the age.

God had shaken Sinai when He gave the law (Heb. 12:18-21; Ex. 19:16-25), and He will shake the nations before He sends His Son (Matt. 24:29-30).

But today, God's people belong to a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28); and they will share the glory of Christ when He establishes that kingdom on earth.

God not only promised the coming of Messiah and the glory of God in the future temples, but He also promised peace (Hag. 2:9). "In this place" refers to the city of Jerusalem where the Messiah will reign as "Prince of peace" (Isa. 9:6).

5. Encouragement: God's Provision (v. 8). Finally, the Lord assured them that, in spite of the bad economy and their lack of wealth, He was able to provide all they needed.

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine."

God does not call us to do anything for which He is not also able and willing to equip us.

To the Israelites of Haggai's generation, He said, "I am with you" (Hag. 1:13), and "...My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!" (Hag. 2:5). Count on and depend upon His strength and work.

Let us not be as those who perished in the wilderness, who "...again and again...tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power" (Ps. 78:41-42).

One day there will be a glorious temple that nobody could destroy or defile.

Knowing this, the discouraged remnant could take courage and finish their work.