

Mid Week • Haggai

INTRODUCTION

The Stucco Fiasco

When this building was being built, I would come over often just to walk around and through it.

It was fascinating watching it go up – and I would marvel at all the technical elements that went in to the construction.

As I would walk through it, I would both silently and out loud, give thanks to God for His goodness.

But one day, something really difficult took place.

It had to do with the stucco on the exterior of the building.

Our general contractor was a good brother and member of the church – Arden Taylor; he was also a close friend.

Most of the subcontractors he selected were guys he'd worked with on other projects – but the stucco contractor was new and had given a bid that would save us a lot on the project.

But, as soon as it came time for him to do his job, problems started surfacing.

He was late - He brought shoddy equipment – he purchased inferior material.

But worst of all, his crews were inexperienced.

They went to work applying the wire and paper to prepare for the exterior, but it was obvious right from the start that they were having problems.

Then, when they started putting the stucco on several days later, it looked horrible.

I was here early one morning when Arden arrived to find them just ruining the street side of the building.

He approached the foreman, and berated him for the poor quality of the work.

Arden had already talked with them about their many problems but they had assured him they would take care of things.

They hadn't and the quality of the work was clearly going downhill fast.

So right there and then, he told them to pack up and leave – they were fired!

The whole crew, probably 15 guys, stood there dumb-struck.

I had never seen Arden more angry or unnerved.

Long after the crew had left, he just stood there and looked at the side of the building.

The Historical Background

This is a little bit of what we have in the book of Haggai.

Haggai is speaking to the people building the temple in Jerusalem – and berating them because of their shoddy and apathetic work.

Let's take a look at the historical background of this important little OT book . . .

In 539 BC, Persia conquered Babylon.

3 years later, in 536 BC, the Persian King, Cyrus, allowed the Jews who were in Exile in Babylon, to return to their land.

The Book of Ezra gives us the details of this return.

The first group of Jews to Return were lead by the civil leader Zerubbabel and the high priest, Joshua.

Nearly 50,000 took part in this first return and most of them settled either in Jerusalem or one of its suburbs.

Now remember, Jerusalem had been virtually leveled by the Babylonians 70 years before, so these returnees were faced with a monumental task of rebuilding.

The first thing they did was to remake the altar of burnt offering that stood in the temple courtyard and make sacrifices there, renewing their worship of God.

Then, in the second year after their return, they laid the foundation of a new temple.

Prior to laying this foundation in the second year, they had taken enough time to make themselves some rudimentary houses – but they knew the priority was on rebuilding the temple and only spent as much time on their own houses as was necessary to provide basic shelter.

Once that was done, they set to work on the temple – and that's when the trouble began.

The half-blooded Samaritans asked to be included in rebuilding the Jewish temple.

When Zerubbabel refused, they went to the Persian court and

complained that the Jews were trying to rebuild Jerusalem as a fortress from which to rebel against the Persian overlords. The reconstruction of the temple and city defenses was ordered stopped until an investigation could be made. The people were allowed to work on their own houses and so they turned to build them up while they waited for the investigation to be done. It was delayed, and soon the people dropped the work on the temple altogether. In fact, even when it was clear that the Persians no longer cared one way or the other about the temple, the people kept working on their own house, then their fields, then their summer homes, then a room addition here and a garden there, and on and on it went, while the temple stood not even half complete. 16 years passed before the Persian court finally took official action. Darius replaced Cyrus as king, and reenacted Cyrus's original charter for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. This was in 520 BC. It would take another 4 years for the temple to be completed. And it was largely as a result of Haggai's prophetic ministry that it was finally accomplished! Haggai was sent by God to stir the people to action in rebuilding the temple.

This book is four fiery mini-sermons which are aimed at exhorting the people to maintain a right set of priorities.

Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are known as the post-exilic prophets because they are the 3 who lived and ministered to those Jews who returned from the exile in Babylon.

Haggai and Zechariah lived at the same time and their messages amplify one another.

Malachi lived about a 100 years later and deals with many of the same problems Haggai and Zechariah did.

It seemed that the prophetic voice more often than not fell on deaf ears.

CHAPTER 1

¹In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying,

This time marker gives us great confidence in placing this in August of 520 BC because we have detailed records from the Persian court on when Darius ruled in relation to events in other areas of the ancient Middle East.

Zerubbabel was the governor – officially commissioned by the Persians to administer the government there in Jerusalem and its suburbs.

Joshua was the high priest.

²“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.””’

As I mentioned before, the people had returned 16 years before and the first thing they did was to rebuild the altar of burnt offerings so they could renew their worship of God.

Then, they built some rudimentary shelters to live in and provide basic cover while they set to work on rebuilding the temple.

But when they faced some opposition from their enemies, they called it quits on the temple and went to work on making themselves nicer houses.

The problem is – 16 YEARS HAVE NOW PASSED AND the work on the temple has been completely neglected!

Their excuse was – “Well, it’s obviously not the right *time* to work on the temple.”

“After all – look, we don’t have a permit from the Persians.”

Wrong, they did – they had a *royal* decree from King Cyrus!

“Well, yes, but there’s some question about that now.”

As the next king, Darius would decide, there was no question and the work stoppage was wrong.

“Okay, but look at our situation here. We need better homes to live in. And our crops and herds need tending. Every season we’re barely able to eek out an existence.”

Yes, that was true – as we’ll see, prosperity eluded them

because their priorities were all wrong!

“Well besides, while we were in Babylon, we learned to worship God a bit differently. We didn’t have a temple there and we got along okay. Why do we need a temple now?”

They were willing to resign themselves to far less than the best – the minimum was good enough.

They were content with a mediocre and lukewarm relationship with God.

Adopting a false sense of piety and earnestness in their pursuit of God, they put a *religious spin* on their spiritual apathy by saying, “The time has not come to build the temple. We’re waiting on God’s timing.”

Doesn’t that sound spiritual – “I’m waiting on the Lord!”

How often is that just a cover for spiritual apathy?

Why wait for the Lord’s timing when His command is clear?

If God has spoken – we need to respond!

His word IS His release and mandate!

They ought to have focused on the rebuilding of the temple rather than neglect it.

The temple was the center and heart of their worship – without the temple, they could not enter in to the fullness of fellowship with God.

They justified their failure by putting a religious spin on it – “We’re waiting on the Lord!”

God, through Haggai, calls their bluff.

3Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4“Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?”

The word “temple” here is literally “house.”

They had said, “It’s not the right time to build God’s house.”

So God asks, “Oh! But it’s the right time to build *your* house?”

And not just simple dwelling places – but fancy houses with decorative paneling.

He lays the finger on their motives, on their hearts!

The reason they had neglected the temple was because they were selfish and wanted to work on their own houses, their own comfort.

It didn't take 16 years to build a house.

They had made themselves *nice* homes in the first couple years after the return.

Then, they had enlarged them and decorated them.

Then they had added on more and more.

16 years had passed and they were *still* building their own mansions.

But that wasn't all they were working on – as we'll see in the next verses, they were also pursuing their careers and business ventures as well.

God says, "Look at your house – and look at mine. ARE YOU PRIORITIES RIGHT?"

5 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."**

7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! ⁸Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD. ⁹"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. ¹⁰Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. ¹¹For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of *your* hands."

The best commentary we can make on these verses is to simply read

what Jesus said in Matt. 6

24“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

25“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? **26**Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? **27**Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28“So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; **29**and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **30**Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith?

31“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32**For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **33**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

This passage from Haggai is the perfect historical illustration of what Jesus said.

The people were outwardly religious – but their hearts weren’t really centered on God.

They were pre-occupied with their own desires.

They had made *prosperity* rather than *piety* their main goal.

They longed for *things* rather than God.

And because they were aiming at the wrong thing, they were experiencing failure.

Prosperity eluded them because their priorities weren't right.

Instead of plenty, they knew poverty.

Instead of being satisfied, they were hungry and thirsty, both physically and spiritually.

They had no peace – they were restless.

As we seek to share the gospel with the lost, this is one of the most important truths that we can share with people – even people who APPEAR to be religious but who lack a genuine relationship with God: **HAPPINESS AND CONTENTMENT ARE NOT ATTAINED BY AIMING AT HAPPINESS AND CONTENTMENT!**

They come as a result of aiming at a more worthy objective – and that is the Glory of God!

You and I were created to know and enjoy God!

You and I were created FOR Him – not for ourselves alone!

If we go about life seeking in all things – ALL THINGS – to live faithfully before the Lord, then and only then will we find peace and joy.

If I selfishly aim at my own pleasure – true satisfaction will always elude me.

I'm making a new pulpit and yesterday I was cutting the legs on a table saw.

I had to make 45 degree cuts on 4" oak boards.

The key to making the cut straight is to not look at the saw blade, but to keep the opposite edge of the wood snug against the fence, the stop.

You make a straight cut and get success by looking elsewhere than the blade.

And so it is in life – we were created for God and we will only find happiness and contentment when aim at Him.

Happiness, joy, pleasure, satisfaction, peace, prosperity; are all found in only one place – Jesus Christ!

And that is why God says here in v. 9 to the Jews of Haggai's day,

“You looked for much, but indeed *it came to little*; and when you brought it home, I blew it away.”

Why did God blow it away?

Because He loved them too much to let them be content with something less than the best.

Look . . .

Why?” says the LORD of hosts. “Because of My house that *is in* ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. ¹⁰Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. ¹¹For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of *your* hands.”

God would not let them become complacent and settle for less.

A mediocre spiritual life was not good enough.

So He made sure their misplaced efforts never paid off.

Now, listen carefully because I have some pointed words to share.

In this passage, God equates right priorities with their focusing on building the temple.

They needed to apply the same kind of energy and effort they’d put into the pursuit of their *own* prosperity into the prosperity of the house of God.

Did God mean that after the temple was finished the people could go back to what they were doing?

No! What He meant was they needed to *keep* God as the fundamental priority of their lives, AND THAT PRIORITY NEEDED TO FIND CONCRETE EXPRESSION IN THE WAY THEY LIVED.

It wasn’t enough to merely maintain some kind of nominal religious ritual at the altar of burnt sacrifice.

It wasn’t enough to mouth pious platitudes about God’s timing.

It wasn’t enough to have a reputation and name for being the people of God.

It wasn’t even enough to have some kind of *testimony* of past faith – as they had by making the return from Babylon.

The proof of a genuine past is an abiding present!

So God challenges them – “Where am I in your religion?”

The fact is, if they were really right in their priorities, the temple would have been completed long before.
And once it was complete, the people would have gone on to restore each and every element of the law as God proscribed in His word.

What does this say to us?

Just this – If our faith is sincere and focused on the right priorities, then the things of God will be the most important things in our lives.

His kingdom, His work, His plan, His people the Church, will be our pre-occupation.

Our *occupation* may be the work of an engineer, salesperson, counter-worker, assembly-line, management.

But our **PRE**-occupation will be the Work of the Kingdom of God. And central to this will be a concern for the family of God, the Church – which the Apostle Paul says is a spiritual temple – the habitation of God by the Spirit.

I am going to say something now that I realize may sound a bit iconoclastic in the casual kind of environment of Calvary Chapel – but it's my firm conviction that the man or woman who has a sense of right priorities is also *deeply committed* to a local church and makes their involvement there one of the main and primary components of their lives.

Isn't this what we see God exhorting the people to do here?

Someone might argue – “But Lance, the temple and the church are two different things.”

Agreed – but Paul did say that the church is a spiritual temple – and if the physical temple received such strong emphasis from the Lord, HOW MUCH MORE THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE?

And isn't the local church a manifestation of that spiritual temple? Indeed it is!

12Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with 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. ¹³Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, spoke the LORD's message to the people, saying, "I *am* with you, says the LORD." ¹⁴So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, 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, ¹⁵on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.

It took three weeks for the work crews to assemble – but assemble they did, and work was renewed in restoring the temple.

About a month later, Haggai receives another message from the Lord

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Haggai 2

¹In the seventh *month*, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying: ²"Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying: ³'Who is left among you who saw this temple [again, the word is literally 'house] in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, *is this* not in your eyes as nothing? ⁴Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the LORD; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the LORD, 'and work; for I *am* with you,' says the LORD of hosts. ⁵'*According to* the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'

Among those who made the return from Babylon were a handful who had lived in Jerusalem prior to the destruction of the City and the Exile.

They had seen the glory of Solomon's temple.

And the appearance of this one they were rebuilding was so weak in comparison; it moved them to near despair.

Imagine this – one night after we leave, a fire catches in the wiring and this place burns down.

So we have to meet in a new facility and end up moving back to room LA –6 at Oxnard College; seats about 60, run down; have to do the church in a box routine every week.

The whole time we'd be thinking about the glory days on Eastman Ave.

That's the idea here.

Solomon's temple was incredible!

What they were building was a shack in comparison and there were those who stood to the side and just wept.

God comes with a rousing message of encouragement.

“Don't worry about how it looks!”

“Just as My presence was with the nation when they came out of Egypt, I am with you in this endeavor.”

“Don't live by what you see – live by faith and do what is right – build My house.”

Then God makes this incredible promise . . .

6“For thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Once more (it *is* a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; ⁷and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,’ says the LORD of hosts. ⁸‘The silver *is* Mine, and the gold *is* Mine,’ says the LORD of hosts. ⁹‘The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘And in this place I will give peace,’ says the LORD of hosts.”

While the man-made beauty of this second temple was nothing compared to the first, God promises that *He* will fill it with a beauty that far surpasses the beauty of Solomon's temple.

Indeed, even though the precious ark of the covenant was no longer around and so the Shekinah glory of God would not inhabit this second temple, one day, an even greater glory would arrive and enter it.

Haggai refers to this as the “Desire of all Nations.”

Commentators are divided in their view on precisely what Haggai means by this.

Traditionally, the Desire of All Nations has been understood as referring to the Messiah who brings true and lasting peace and a righteous justice to Earth when he comes to reign.

But calling the Messiah the *Desire* of All Nations, seems a bit difficult when we realize the Bible regularly refers to Gentiles as God-haters and rejecters.

What is it the nations desire?

Historically, what have nations warred over and sought to control – wealth as best represented by gold and silver.

That's why God says in v. 8 that the gold and silver are His.

More than likely what God is saying in these verses is a word of encouragement to the builders to not worry about the appearance of this temple.

Their faithfulness will result in a building that God will use as the focal point of the entire world.

You see – it was in this temple that Jesus appeared.

It was here that his parents dedicated him while he was still an infant.

And at that dedication both Anna and Simeon gave prophetic announcements about his ministry to the World.

It was here that as a 12 year old child he would confound the best of the scribes and priests with His grasp of spiritual things.

It was here that He would reveal the wholly anger of God in clearing the temple of crass religious merchandizing.

It was here that He would heal the sick and cast out demons.

It was here that as a man He would enter in to debate with the religious leaders and confront them with their error.

It was here that one the day of the crucifixion, the veil in the temple would be torn from top to bottom.

It was here that the Holy Spirit would do such a powerful work through the disciples who would gather with the crowds and teach about Jesus.

The second temple was greater than Solomon's first temple simply in that it was the second temple that Jesus came to.

Haggai's words are a kind of time-compression.

While the Messiah will come to this temple *they* are building – one day, another temple will be built from which the Messiah will rule over all the earth.

In that day, the very order of the heavens and earth will be shaken and things will be dramatically turned around.

No longer will gold and silver be medium of value and what people consider precious.

On that day – it will be the will and work of God that is precious.

And that is why the temple will be the Desire of All Nations – because it will be the throne of Christ.

What I love about these verses is what they say to us about facilities.

It's not how big or well equipped they are that matters.

Beauty of architecture and functionality of form are not the issue.

The question is – is God there? Is He blessing?

Is the Lord at work.

Let's be honest about this – God doesn't need a building to work!

We could just as easily be in that empty lot across the street tonight.

Let's not get hung up on buildings – let's always seek to simply see them as vehicles that God wants to use to teach us more about faith, about believing in Him and about loving and serving Him.

I am so thankful to God for this place – but I am far more thankful for what I see Him doing in the lives of those who come!

I am blown away by what God showed me as we built this thing – my faith in the Lord has been doubled by this project.

And now as we start making plans for the next project, I have a foundation to work from – but I know God wants to yet again double my faith in Him.

But folks, let's never lose sight of the fact that IT'S NOT ABOUT A BUILDING – it's about THE building of our faith.

10 On the twenty-fourth *day* of the ninth *month*, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, ¹¹“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Now, ask the priests *concerning the law*, saying, ¹²“If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?’””

Then the priests answered and said, “No.”

13 And Haggai said, “If *one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?*”

So the priests answered and said, “It shall be unclean.”

14 Then Haggai answered and said, “‘So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,’ says the LORD, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.

Two months go by and Haggai has another word from the Lord. This time it’s not about the temple – it’s about the *casual* and *insincere* attitudes the people have toward God.

Haggai begins by asking some questions:

If a holy thing touches unholy things, do they become holy? No.

If an unclean thing touches clean things, will they become defiled and corrupt? Yes.

What God was saying was that the people who came to worship at the altar of burnt offering thought that simply by making their offering to God they went away approved, clean, holy.

But God said that their casual and flippant attitude towards Him, as expressed by their inattention to the temple, was actually having the opposite effect; it was making the altar *unclean!*

I want to ask you to picture this:

There’s a level hilltop that is covered with piles of broken and cracked building stones.

In one area an immense altar has been constructed and smoke is rising as priests take hunks of meat and cast them on it.

There’s a line of a dozen or so people standing several yards away, each leading a goat or sheep.

When a person gets to the front of the line, the hand their animal to a priest who takes it over to a table and prepares it to offer as a burnt offering.

That person then steps to the side and waits watching the priest at work, till he takes the meat over to the altar, ascends a small set of stairs and then throws the meat onto the grate that covers the coals.

The meat hisses and sizzles and immediately the smoke starts to rise.

As the person looks at the altar, in the immediate background is one of those piles of broken stone – a mute witness of a non-existent temple.

Each pile, and each stone spoke eloquently of the hypocrisy of the people!

Any sincere heart who made an offering there would have wept over the lack of a temple.

Genuine faithfulness demanded the temple be rebuilt.

This was patently obvious – and the lack of work belied the sincerity of the motives of those who came to “worship” God.

We repeat this very same error when we come to church and lift up our hands or voices to the Lord in worship, but then go home to a marriage that is a pile of brokenness and we do nothing to clear it out and start over.

We do the same when we read a chapter of the bible but then we don't do what it says.

We do the very same thing when we pray and the Spirit prompts us to some action and we ignore Him!

And may I say that we do the same thing when we call Jesus “Lord,” but His Lordship doesn't extend to our wallets.

You see, rebuilding the temple, for most of the people, wouldn't mean actual time and labor; it meant *giving* so that skilled workmen could be hired and materials purchased.

Our motto is Learning & Living God's Word.

It's not enough to just learn – we must also live!

When we get to heaven, God will not give us a quiz on how much we know.

Instead, we'll be judged on the basis of how faithfully we've lived in light of what we know.

Just as Haggai said here – going to church 2 times a month and throwing a \$5 spot in the offering bag as it goes by does not buy you a pass that renews your membership in the *Good Guy Club*. Rather – unless your priorities are right to begin with and God is first and foremost in your life and heart, then going to church avails you not at all!

You can't earn points with God by doing religious things.

Do the right thing – the only thing.
Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness – and then
everything else will fall into the right place.

Haggai goes on to say . . .

15‘And now, carefully consider from this day forward: from before stone was laid upon stone in the temple of the LORD—¹⁶since those *days*, when *one* came to a heap of twenty ephahs, there were *but* ten; when *one* came to the wine vat to draw out fifty baths from the press, there were *but* twenty. ¹⁷I struck you with blight and mildew and hail in all the labors of your hands; yet you did not *turn to Me,*’ says the LORD. ¹⁸‘Consider now from this day forward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid—consider it: ¹⁹Is the seed still in the barn? As yet the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have not yielded *fruit. But from this day I will bless you.*’”

Whereas they’ve known want and mystifying, endless lack – because now they’ve set about to rebuild the temple; in fact, “Mark it” God says – “from this very day that you lay the first stones, I will bless you.”

20And again the word of the LORD came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying, ²¹“Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying:

‘I will shake heaven and earth.

22 I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms;

I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms.

I will overthrow the chariots

And those who ride in them;

The horses and their riders shall come down,

Every one by the sword of his brother.

23 ‘In that day,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel,’ says the LORD, ‘and will make you like a signet *ring*; for I have chosen you,’ says the LORD of hosts.”

This 4th and final prophecy was delivered on the same day as the 3rd, but its direction was far different.

This was specifically for the governor, Zerubbabel.

The key for understanding this passage is found by investigating just who Zerubbabel was.

The reason he was selected to rule as governor and why the Jews followed him was because he was a descendant of the kingly line of David.

As the governor, his concern would be to protect the Jews in Jerusalem and its suburbs from their enemies.

For several generations now, the nation of Israel had been swept about by other nations like so much flotsam and jetsam.

But God here affirms His control over and protection of His people.

The day is coming when God will judge the nations and establish His people.

God says that on that day, God will take Zerubbabel – as the rightful heir to the throne of David, and make him like a ring of authority.

The signet ring was the special ring an official would use to press into a seal and this show ownership and authority.

It was a mark and sign of identity.

Zerubbabel, as a descendant of David, is a picture of the Messiah.

Just as God worked to raise up Zerubbabel to the office of governor and leader for the Jews, and then encouraged him to take charge, so the day will come when God will bring Christ as the King of the Jews and the Ruler of all nations.

In the same way that Zerubbabel as governor foreshadowed the rule of Christ, you and I, as Christians, as to foreshadow His earthly rule by demonstrating His spiritual rule over our lives today.

Again, as I’ve said so often – when the world looks at the Church, what they ought to see is a glimpse of what the world will be like when Jesus comes to rule.

May God, by His grace, make it so.