

## **“Rebuilding the House of the Lord”**

*Haggai 1:12-15*

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### **Haggai 1:12-15**

*The People Obey the Lord*

<sup>12</sup>Then 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 LORD. <sup>13</sup>Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD’s message, “I am with you, declares the LORD.” <sup>14</sup>And 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, <sup>15</sup>on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

### **Introduction**

How do those inside the church perceive the house of the Lord? How do those who are outside the church perceive the house of the Lord? In the past, people used to have a high view of church. However, today many people, both inside and outside of the church, have a low view of it. There’s a correlation between how those inside the church and those outside the church perceive the church. Society tells us life is all about us. Burger King’s motto is “Have it your way.” Apple has products named, “iPhone, iPod”. Sometimes we bring that “all about me” attitude into the church. “How can the church help me? How is this message or music catered to me?” In some ways that is right, however, we need to be careful about making the church all about me. If people within the church are self-centered, people outside the church sense it. Selfishness breaks the church and it’s something that’s within all of us.

The book of Haggai is about how God rebuilds the temple of the Lord. Haggai 1:1-11 is about how God wants to rebuild His people first. The Israelites have returned to Jerusalem after being in exile. Selfishness was rampant among them. Instead of investing in God’s house that laid in ruins, they invested in their own homes and lived in luxury for many years. After rebuilding the people, in Haggai 1:12-15 God is interested in rebuilding His house.

This is an overview of the book of Haggai:

Haggai 1:1-11 Rebuilding the people of God

Haggai 1:12-15 Rebuilding the temple

Haggai 2:1-9 Encouragement for rebuilding

Haggai 2:10-23 Blessings from rebuilding

## **I. The House of the Lord**

### **A. What was the House of the Lord then? – the temple**

Haggai 1:2 – *“Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.”*

The temple was the meeting place between man and God. Before the temple, God’s presence was carried in an ark and placed in a tabernacle. But King David found it in his heart to build a God a permanent residence. However, God would not allow King David to build the temple due to his sin. Instead, King David’s son, Solomon, would build God a temple around 970 to 931 BC. In 587 BC, Jerusalem was sieged by Nebuchadnezzar. The temple was destroyed, and the Jews were exiled. For 400 hundred years, the Israelites had no place to meet with God.

Throughout the Old Testament, especially during the exilic times, the people of God were so stubborn and did not want to hear God’s word; in post-exilic times as well. It’s no wonder God’s people were so resistant to what the prophets said, because there was no temple at the time. This is why it was so important for the people to rebuild the temple again in 520 BC. The temple was finally rebuilt by 516 BC.

However, there is no temple in Jerusalem today. In 70 AD, the Roman government destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple. Though there is no temple today, God has not told the people to rebuild the temple, because the meeting place between man and God is no longer the temple.

#### **B. What is the House of the Lord today? – the church**

If you want to meet with the Lord today, you go to church. In 1 Peter 2:5, Peter is talking to Christians who are spread out throughout different nations. He says to them, *“you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”* Peter is telling Christians they are the spiritual house – where people meet with God. They are to be like the priest who mediated between man and God. The priest would offer sacrifices on their behalf in order to restore their relationship with God.

Matthew 16:18 – *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

In this passage, Jesus is referring to the universal church – everyone who has and will accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He is saying that the gates of hell will never overcome the church. We are to care for the universal church by being committed to the local church.

Acts 11:26 – *And when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.*

This passage is talking about the local church. You know are committed to the local church, when something happens in your life, people in the church know about it. However, the local church is not just about us and our commitment; it’s also about being commissioned. We are blessed as a church to be a blessing to others. This is seen in Acts 11:26. As the church gathered and lived in

community, it was clear to others that they followed Jesus. When the people in our city look at our lives, will they see Jesus? It's important to be committed to your local church, because as we come to church, we get fed.

If you want good food, you go to restaurants where good food is offered. These days, you don't have to physically go to a restaurant because of food delivery services like DoorDash, UberEats, and Grubhub. The church is called to be both the restaurant and the food delivery service. The church is important because it's where we get fed. But especially in this day and age, where a lot of people may not be going to church, we need to go out into the world and deliver the food of Christ. Always come to get the food of God and be the church

## **II. Lessons from the people who rebuilt the House of the Lord [12]**

*<sup>12</sup>Then 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 LORD.*

### **A. There will always be a remnant**

There are several leaders mentioned in this passage. First, there is Haggai the prophet. Haggai's name means "festal". His name is linked with his message to the people to rebuild the temple of God. In the Old Testament, the Jews were called to go to the temple three times a year to celebrate different festivals. These festivals were a reminder of what God did in the past so that the people could live for Him in the present and the future. But in order to celebrate these festivals, a temple was needed. God is using Haggai, the prophet, to bring God's word to rebuild the temple.

There was also Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel. However, according to 1 Chronicles 3:19 he was the son of Pedaiah. Pedaiah was the brother of Shealtiel, who was the son of Jehoiachin. Jehoiachin is important because he is part of the lineage of King David. It was through King David that the Messiah was going to come. The significance of Zerubbabel being called the son of Shealtiel is to emphasize that he is in the line of King David. Zerubbabel was also the governor of Judah. At that time, because Judah was no longer a kingdom, they no longer had a king. Therefore, the governor was the political leader. In other words, Zerubbabel filled the king's role. Then there was Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. The high priest was the mediator between God and the people.

God used the prophet, priest, and the king to lead the people. Leadership is important. However, it's not just the leadership that is important. In verse 12 it says, "*with all the remnant of the people.*" Remnant refers to the people that God had preserved from the nation of Israel. Though we are faithless, God will always be faithful and preserve a remnant. This means that there will always be people to do God's work. Doing the work of God is a privilege because God doesn't need us. If we don't do it, somebody else will.

### **B. Never underestimate what obedience can do**

For sixteen years, the Israelites were stubborn and disobeyed God's voice and neglected to rebuild the temple. However, when Haggai obeyed the Lord and relayed God's message to the people, the people obeyed and started rebuilding. In Haggai, chapters 1 and 2 take place over the course of fifteen weeks. Within that time span, Haggai inspired the people to start rebuilding and continue to do so in the midst of discouragement. Never underestimate what obedience can do. Never underestimate the power of one prayer, one sermon, one Bible verse, one "Hello". All God needs is one act of obedience.

### **C. Know that obedience should not be by itself**

Never underestimate obedience, but also never overestimate obedience. Obedience is not the goal. In verse 12 it says, *"And the people feared the LORD."* They obeyed and feared the Lord. Fear can be interchanged with reverence or awe. The people were in fear and in awe of God's power. But they were also in fear and in awe of God's love.

Exchange the word "fear" with "love". We fear what we love. When you're afraid of somebody with power, you are afraid because you love your life. The people feared the Lord not just because they feared for their lives, but more so because they were in love with who He was. The people feared, respected, and loved the Lord. When you obey, aim to do it out of love for God. God doesn't just want your obedience; He wants your heart. Obedience is the external action and love is the internal motive.

A.W. Tozer. said, "If we cooperate with Him in living obedience, God will manifest Himself to us, and that manifestation will be the difference between a nominal Christian life and a life radiant with the light of His face." If you lovingly obey God, God can do something in your life. There is grace when we obey.

### **D. They came...and worked**

Verse 14 says, *"they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts."* Broken walls take intentional work to rebuild. Broken people take work to rebuild. And broken churches take intentional work to rebuild. What is your attitude as you come to church? Do you have a "come-to-church" attitude? Or do you have a "come-to-church-and-work" attitude? A "come-to-church" attitude is very consumeristic: "What's in it for me?" But a "come-to-church-and-work" attitude is not just about what you receive, but it also focuses on how you can give to God and to others.

There are many ways to serve formally in the church, but there are also many ways to serve informally. Never underestimate one handshake and one smile to people. When we come to church, do we share the presence of God with others? When we come to church, will we work?

Another question to think about is "What kind of worker are you?" Are you someone who waits to be asked, or are you the one who proactively seeks out ways to help? In this passage, all the people came and they worked.

## **III. Lessons on the Lord who rebuilt His House [13-15]**

<sup>13</sup>Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, "I am with you, declares the LORD." <sup>14</sup>And 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, <sup>15</sup>on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

#### **A. The Lord gives His Word [13]**

Haggai 1:13 – *Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, "I am with you, declares the LORD."*

God speaks to us today because He wants us to receive. When He speaks, are we quick to receive and listen?

#### **B. The Lord gives Himself [13]**

<sup>13</sup>Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, "I am with you, declares the LORD."

The temple represented the presence of God and though it was not rebuilt, God is still giving His presence. God is encouraging the Israelites by telling them He is with them despite the brokenness. This is reminiscent of a passage in Exodus:

Exodus 3:13-14 – <sup>13</sup>Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" <sup>14</sup>God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you."

The great I AM has been faithful to Moses, God's people, His remnant, and to His church. By telling the people He is with them in Haggai, God is telling them He is with them and He will help them rebuild the temple. Religious people want to get the work done. But people who want to be in a relationship with God, want to get the work done with Him. As we work, God is working on us. He is giving more Himself to us so that we can see more of the great I AM.

#### **C. The Lord wants to give His power [14]**

<sup>14</sup>And 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,

The "LORD of hosts" is referred to fourteen times in this book. It's a phrase that highlights how God is the leader of the heavenly and earthly armies of Israel. It's used to emphasize God's greatness and power. In verse 14 it says, "*And the LORD stirred up.*" This means that God caused the people to act. He stirred up their hearts to be alive for Him in obedience again. This is not just mere motivation, but it is power working in the people's lives so that they can rebuild the temple. As God stirred them up, their spirits were stirred by the Holy Spirit.

In the passage it says that God specifically stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel and the spirit of Joshua. In the Old Testament, God would often stir up the prophet, priest, and the king. But in Haggai, it also says God stirred up *“the spirit of all the remnant of the people.”* This was not common in the Old Testament. However, this is a special time because they are rebuilding the house of God.

How do we take part in the important work of receiving the power of God? It’s through prayer. We must work, but we need to pray that God will work.

Psalm 127:1 it says, *“Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.”*

Psalm 127 was fulfilled in Jesus Christ because He is the great worker. He is the great prophet, priest, and king. He gives power and life to the people of God. Psalm 127:1 is a call to work with God.

This is something the first-generation immigrant church did well. They struggled with English and communicating with the community. But from that they learned how to communicate with God. They prayed like crazy. Instead of becoming too reliant upon our own skills, we need to see that our work is not good enough. We need God’s power; we need to be stirred. Sometimes this means we’re not always happy with how God is working in our life. But may we be stirred up in such a way that we move with and towards the Lord. In order to do so, we must learn to pray.

## **Conclusion**

There is a book called “Fresh Win, Fresh Fire” by Jim Cymbala, who is the pastor of The Brooklyn Tabernacle Church in New York. When he became the pastor, the church was not doing well. But God began to work in the church and stir people to pray. A story in this book sheds light on why the church grew:

Jim Cymbala addressed the church one week, “From this day on, the prayer meeting will be the barometer of the church. This is the engine that will drive the church. Yes, I want you to keep on coming out on Sundays, but Tuesday nights is what it’s all really about.” A minister from Australia happened to be present that morning at the church, so Jim Cymbala introduced him and invited him to say a few words to the congregation. He made one comment, “I heard what your pastor said, and here’s something to think about. You can tell how popular church is by who comes on Sunday mornings. You can tell how popular the pastor or evangelist is by who comes on Sunday nights [where they have their additional service]. But you can tell how popular Jesus is by who comes to the prayer meeting.” And with that, he walked off the platform.

May we hear God’s voice loud and clear. May Jesus be popular in the church forever. May we get to work and rest in Him in prayer. As we do the work of prayer, God is working in and through us. This passage is telling us to be a people that rebuild the house of the Lord, but to also see the One that is rebuilding His house. He cares for it and He cares for us.

May God stir us up so that we could pray. May God help us to endlessly serve Him and the world. He is the Lord of this church, He is the Lord of the harvest, and He will help us to live for Him and to be with Him and to work for the glory of His name.