



Growth Group Studies
HEAC Term 2 2017
Haggai

REBUILDING GOD'S PEOPLE	Passage	Sunday
1. God's people distracted	Haggai 1	21 May
2. God's people stirred	Haggai 2	28 May

Theological Context

God has promised to dwell with his people in a land

The LORD had said to Abram/Abraham, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Gem 12:1-3

Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God. Exodus 29:45-46

So the faithful people of God knew that, even though they were exiled to Babylon due to their sin, God would restore them and provide a "home" for them to be at rest and be able to fully give God his worth (worship).

Historical Context

So far this term, we're been looking at the opening chapters of Ezra (see separate studies). After the fall of Babylon in 539 BC, the Persian king Cyrus is now "the most powerful man in the world".

Cyrus' foreign policy was "God's people are now free to go back and rebuild their temple in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:1-4).

So after 70 years in exile God's people returned to the ruins, so they could rebuild **their lives around their God – the true God of the universe.**

Things started so well. God's people gave generously (2:68-69). They completed the building of the alter and got the central work of the temple up and running (3:2-6). Then they build the foundation of the new (2nd) temple and they praised and thanked God (3:10-11).

But there was mixed celebrations when the older generation who had seen the glorious former (1st) temple (built by Solomon 1 Kings 6, 2 Chron 3) wept at seeing this new temple (Ezra 3:12).

When the local enemies realised how determined God's people were to rebuild their lives in Jerusalem, and that they were being let behind, they too wanted to be in (4:2), but their offer of help was rejected (4:3). Strong opposition arose – from king Cyrus through to Darius (4:4-5, 24 and the opposition went on for many more years 4:6-23).

Ezra Timeline	Persian king	Events
539-530 BC	Cyrus	539 Ezra 1-6 (1:1); fall of Babylon; return of exiles 539 Daniel (1:21, 9:1, 11:1) 536 Daniel (10:1)
530-522 BC	Cambyses	
522-485 BC	Darius	520 Ezra 5:1, 6:14; Hag (1:1), Zech (1:1)
485-465 BC	Xerxes/Ahasuerus	482 Esther (1:3) 478 Esther (2:16) 473 Esther (3:7)
465-424 BC	Artaxerxes	458 Ezra 7-10 (7:8) 445 Nehemiah 1-12 (1:1, 2:1) 445-432 Malachi 432 Nehemiah 13 (13:6)

God's people got spooked and "downed tools" and stopped work on the temple to let things cool off. It would take two prophets to put a rocket under them to get God's people back to the half-finished temple building site (Ezra 5:1, 6:14). So how are these prophets going to successfully motivate the people?

Literary Context

Ezra - Considered historical
Part of 1-2 Chron

Haggai & Zechariah – part of the 12 minor prophets (shorter compared to Isaiah & Jeremiah) & with Malachi – finish off the OT period. [There was a 400 years inter-testamental gap of no new prophesy – see Amos 8:11-12.]

Haggai 1

Recap:

Re-read Ezra 1:1 and Ezra 4:24. Using the timeline on page 3, for how long was the work on the temple halted?

What was the cause of this? (Ezra 4:4-5)

What does this tell us about the motivations and priorities of God's people?

Read Haggai 1:1-4

Haggai's prophecy is delivered to Zerrubabel (See 2 Samuel 7:12-13 & Matthew 1:12-16) and Joshua (the priest). What is the significance of each of these leaders in relation to God's plans for His people? (See also Revelation 17:14 and Hebrews 4:14)

How does Haggai 1:2 compare to what we read in Ezra 1:2-3? What can we conclude from this, particularly in light of Haggai 1:4?

Read Haggai 1:5-15

In v6, how are the Israelites' fairing having turned away from their task of building the temple (Cf Ecc 1:8)?

What do we learn about God's character in v8 (See Ex 25:8)?

We see a significant change of direction in v12.

- What God-given motivation for this change can we see in v11?
- How is the last sentence in v12 a significant development (Cf Ezra 4:4)

Application

In what ways might we be tempted to prioritise building our own 'paneled houses'?

How do God's words to the Israelites in Haggai 1:6 speak to us today in modern Australia?

What types of fear might be holding us back from fulfilling God's purposes in our lives?

Haggai 2

Read Haggai 2:1-5

1. To get a sense of the “former glory” (v3) of the first temple, read through 1Kings 6:14-36. How does this compare to the what stands there in its place at the time of Haggai’s prophecy?
2. God’s words in v3 and 4 serve to give the remnant an encouragement and reassurance for their current setting but they also serve a greater purpose – what is it? (See Exodus 3:12 and Exodus 19:5-8).

Read Haggai 2:6 - 9

3. How do God’s words in seek to reset the Israelite’s priorities?
 - i. In v6 and v7?
 - ii. In v8?
4. Read Hebrews 12:26 – 29, alongside Haggai 2:6.
 - i. What is being spoken of in these verses?
 - ii. What is the “kingdom that cannot be shaken”?
 - iii. How are we to respond?
5. What hope is on offer in v9?
6. How does v9 relate to what we read in 1Cor6:19-20?

Read Haggai 2:10 - 15

7. How many months have passed between Haggai2:1 and Haggai 2:10?
8. What is God’s message to the remnant in v10 – 15? And what is the resulting effect of this (There are 4 examples in v14-17). See also Galatians 5:16 – 17.

Application

What are the facets of a Christian life lived in full acceptance of God's promise to be with His people?

What does v14 teach us about our good works?

How should we respond to this promise? (See Rom12:1-2). What does this look like practically?

The book of Haggai reminds us that there is more at stake than our day to day challenges. Col2:15 and 1Cor 15:54-55 should give us further reassurance. What is the root of this reassurance and the covenant promises God has made to His people?