

14. Haggai

I. Background and Context

- A. Haggai's name means "festal" which fits with the theme of his book, as he served as prophet during the years of Ezra and Nehemiah, the rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of Israel's feasts.
- B. Similar to other prophets, the authority of Haggai rests with the "word of the Lord" (1.1).
- C. Haggai is one of the easiest prophets to date, prophesying between August and December of 520 B.C., as he clearly references rulers like Darius and dates each oracle.
- D. Key themes of the book of Haggai include:
 1. *The restoration of God's house*, as Haggai motivates Zerubbabel and Joshua to complete the work of temple restoration.
 2. *The prophetic word is the divine Word*, as the phrase "thus says the LORD" is repeated several times in the book of Haggai (1.2, 5, 7; 2.6, 11).
 3. *The Lord is sovereign*, as the title "LORD of hosts" is attributed to God 14 times in the book of Haggai, God who gives the divine word (1.1), controls the fortunes of his people (1.9, 2.17, 2.19) and nations (2.6-8), directs nature (1.10), motivates his people to action (1.14, 2.4), and establishes and deposes kingdoms (2.20-23).
 4. *The people must work*, as Haggai encourages the people in their physical labor (1.14) and to work with heart (1.5-7, 2.15-19).
 5. *The restoration of David's house*, through Zerubbabel who would enjoy an elevated status (2.23) under God, who had taken off the "ring" of the Davidic house (Jer. 22.24-27) but would now promise to wear it again. This is a clear foreshadowing of the kingship of Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 26.61, 27.40, John 2.18-22, Rom. 1.1-4, Matt. 1.1, 12-13, Lu. 3.27; Zerubbabel is one of the few names that is mentioned in both the paternal and maternal genealogies of Jesus Christ).¹

II. Outline

- A. Introduction: Reluctant Rebuilders (1.1-2)
 1. Characters (1.1)
 2. Context (1.2)
- B. Consider Your Ways: Fruitless Prosperity (1.3-12)
 1. Work without satisfaction (1.3-11)
 2. General response: obedience and fear (1.12)
- C. Promise and progress (1.13-15a)
 1. God's promise (1.13)
 2. Specific response: work begins (1.14-15a)
- D. The Former and Latter Glory of This House (1.15b-2.9)
 1. Comparing past and present (1.15b-2.3)
 2. Acting based on the past (2.4-5)
 3. An image of God's house restored (2.6-9)
- E. Consider Your Ways: Holiness and Defilement; Repentance and Blessing (2.10-19)
 1. Analogy: holiness and defilement (2.10-14)
 2. Consider life before restoration began: you did not turn (2.15-17)
 3. Consider life since restoration began: I will bless (2.18-19)
- F. Zerubbabel: The Signet Ring (2.20-23)

¹ *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1741-2.

1. Destruction upon kingdoms (2.20-22)
2. An image of David's house restored (2.23)²

III. Key Passages

A. First oracle: The Command to Rebuild the Temple

1. Haggai's first message comes after the events of Ezra 4 and coincides with the events of Ezra 5. Because adversaries opposed the building of the temple, the Israelites received an official command of King Artaxerxes to cease the work. In Ezra 5, stirred up by Haggai's message, the people continue the work without the official approval of the new king, Darius.
2. The people are exhorted because they have neglected the temple while rebuilding their own homes (1.4; cf. 1 Chr. 17.1).
3. This is the reason why they have made much effort in their lives, yet yielded little fruit (1.5-6).
4. Haggai's words stir up Zerubbabel and Joshua to action (1.12-15)

B. Second oracle: The Coming Glory of the Temple

1. In this oracle, Haggai encourages Zerubbabel and Joshua to continue in the work (2.4-5, 10-11).
2. God's own glory is the motivation for the work of their hands (2.3, 7-9).

C. Third oracle: Blessings for a Defiled People

1. In this oracle, it is again made clear both that Israel is incapable of making itself holy (2.10-12) and that they have made themselves unclean (2.13-14).
2. God's longsuffering patience with his people is established once more (2.17).
3. Despite this, God graciously states that from this day onward, God will bless his people (2.18-19).

D. Fourth oracle: Zerubbabel Chosen as a Signet

1. Zerubbabel is described as a signet ring, having the royal authority and ownership of God (2.23; cf. Pharaoh and Joseph in Gen. 41.42, and Ahasuerus and Mordecai in Est. 8.2).
2. It is also meant to reverse the symbolism of Jer. 22.24-27, in which God discarded the house of David as one discards a ring.

² *ESV Study Bible*, 1743.