

**\*1 “Haggai: Putting God First In Your Life”**

**\*2** Ezra 4 <sup>24</sup> So the work on the Temple of God in Jerusalem had stopped, and it remained at a standstill until the second year of the reign of King Darius of Persia. 5:1 <sup>1</sup> At that time the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem. They prophesied in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. <sup>2</sup> Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Jeshua son of Jehozadak responded by starting again to rebuild the Temple of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them and helped them.

**\*3** Haggai delivered **four messages** to the restoration community, and he dated all of them in the second year of King Darius I (Hystaspes) of Persia (i.e., 520 B.C.). His ministry, as this book records it, spanned less than **four months**, from the first day of the sixth month (1:1) to the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (2:20). **In the modern calendar this would have been between August 29 and December 18, 520 B.C.** This means that **Haggai was the first prophet to address the returned Israelites** since Zechariah began prophesying to the returnees in the eighth month of that same year (Zech. 1:1). Tom Constable <sup>1</sup> **\*4**

**\*5 Haggai 1** <sup>1</sup> On August 29 of the second year of King Darius’s reign, YaHWeH gave a message through **the prophet Haggai** to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

**\*5a** Haggai gave this first word in September, 520 b.c. At that time the exiles had been back in Jerusalem for 18 years – but the work of rebuilding the temple laid idle for the last 14 years. **In 538 b.c. Cyrus King of Persia allowed the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem after 70 years in captivity. Two years later (536 b.c.) construction on the temple began, led by Zerubbabel. The work stopped after two years (534 b.c.). After 14 years of neglect, work on the temple resumed in 520 b.c. and was finished four years later in 516 b.c. (Ezra 6:15) David Guzik**

**\*6 Haggai 1** <sup>2</sup> “This is what YaHWeH of Heaven’s Armies says: The people are saying, **‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of YaHWeH.’”** <sup>3</sup> Then YaHWeH sent this message through the prophet Haggai: <sup>4</sup> **“Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins?”** <sup>5</sup> This is what YaHWeH of Heaven’s Armies says: **Look at what’s happening to you!** <sup>6</sup> You have planted much but harvest little. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are still thirsty. You put on clothes but cannot keep warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!

**\*6a** The Hebrew figure of speech for this phrase is literally **“put your heart on your roads.”** Haggai asks God’s people to consider what direction their life is headed, and if they really want it to continue that way.

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Zep 3:19.

**\*7** This describes the feverish activity of our own age. People are living at a hectic pace without a thought for God, and are losing out as a result. **There is an ugly itching discontent and covetousness at the heart of society.** So many are obsessed with the pursuit of success and are working all hours to obtain it. Others are consumed with the glitzy life-style and the trinkets of modern consumerism. But is our society any happier? Is it not all a chasing after the wind? We are losing out in so many ways. Our children are losing out, our homes and marriages are losing out, and the lives of our young people are losing out through anti-social behavior. The quality of life as a whole is deteriorating. And our leaders and people in general would be wise to take God's warning seriously: **'Give careful thought to your ways.'** Peter Williams

Because of the great obstacles against the work, God's people had begun to rationalize and decided that it wasn't time to rebuild after all. "If it's so hard, evidently, God doesn't want us to do it – at least no time soon."

**The problem was simply wrongly ordered priorities.** It is easy to see how this happened over 14 years. At first you stop the work because it is so hard and some obstacle in the construction prevents progress. **"We can't get much done at the temple, and I'm tired of living in a wreck. Time to start the remodel at home."** What is most important to you – where is God on your list of priorities?

**Excuses:** God wants me to give attention to things at home – home comes first."

I would fund more construction at the temple but all my money is tied up with my home renovation."

I'm not living extravagantly – look at the other houses in my neighborhood! Look at the chariots in their driveway!"

**Someone should get to work on the temple.** I hope someone steps up to the job – I've got to finish paneling my living room."

The temple hasn't been open for business for well more than 50 years – a little while longer won't matter." This isn't the right time – later will be better."

The altar is there and we can at least sacrifice to YaHWeH. We're getting by."

**The excuses sound familiar – but God saw through them in the days of Haggai, and He sees through them today. The prophet Haggai was like an alarm clock – unwelcome but necessary.** David Guzik

**\*8** From the Christian perspective, this question of priorities is a very important one. **When our homes, families, work, pleasures, etc., begin to displace and jeopardize the centrality of Christ in our lives, it spells spiritual danger.** It means we are beginning to live our Christian life at a shallower level, and that the Holy Spirit, instead of holding the controlling place, has to struggle and compete with all these other things to have so much as a foothold in our life. We then become like those people Jesus spoke of in his parable of the sower. **\*9** 'Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful' (Mark 4:18–19).

If we are not careful, our lives can easily become so cluttered with secular interests and non-essentials that there is less and less time for the things that really matter, such as prayer, the reading of God’s word, and meditation and worship. Peter Williams <sup>2</sup>

**\*10 Haggai 1** <sup>7</sup> “This is what YaHWeH of Heaven’s Armies says: Look at what’s happening to you! <sup>8</sup> Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild My house. Then I will take pleasure in it and be honored, says YaHWeH. <sup>9</sup> You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. And when you brought your harvest home, I blew it away. **Why? Because My house lies in ruins, says YaHWeH of Heaven’s Armies, while all of you are busy building your own fine houses.** <sup>10</sup> It’s because of you that the heavens withhold the dew and the earth produces no crops. <sup>11</sup> I have called for a drought on your fields and hills—a drought to wither the grain and grapes and olive trees and all your other crops, a drought to starve you and your livestock and to ruin everything you have worked so hard to get.”

**\*10a** When God was neglected, nothing worked right. They were able to accomplish some things (like building their own houses), but it didn’t bring the satisfaction that it should have. “Those who plan to give to God ‘once they have enough for themselves’ will never have enough for themselves!” Dyer

**\*11** Haggai warns us that we really lose out when we put ourselves ahead of God. In 1:6 he tells us that our earnings vanish away and our possessions fail to last when God is left out. God held back the rain (v. 10), and for this reason the crops failed (v. 11). After all, the Jews knew God’s promise that He would bless their land if they honored Him (see Deut. 28), **but they did not trust His Word, so they lost the blessing.** Warren Wiersbe <sup>3</sup>

**\*11a Proverbs 3:9–10 (NIV84)** <sup>9</sup> Honor YaHWeH with your wealth, with the first-fruits of all your crops; <sup>10</sup> *then* your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

**\*12 2 Corinthians 9:6–7 (NIV84)** <sup>6</sup> Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup> Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

God doesn’t need our money – but we need to worship God with our money in order to get our possessions into proper perspective. We let go of things to honor and serve the Lord and He will make sure we have more than what we actually need. If your whole mentality (at home, at work, among your neighbors, etc.) is

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Williams, [\*Opening up Haggai\*](#), Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2008), 28.

<sup>3</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, [\*Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Hag 1:1–15.

**advancing God's Kingdom** (Mt 6:33), then everything else will fall into place and "be added unto you." Again it is a matter of priorities, because we cannot put God and mammon both first!

**\*12a Matthew 6:31–33 (NLT)** <sup>31</sup> "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' <sup>32</sup> These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. <sup>33</sup> Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

In this age of grace we are the temples of the Holy Spirit. Collectively we are God's family on earth and right now the center of His attention. It is ourselves and others in the church we should be concerned about building up, growing, maturing in the faith. We should all be more concerned about discipleship of ourselves and others in the church than we are about our personal comfort and agendas. **\*13 Ephesians 4:11–16 (NIV84)** <sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

**\*14 Haggai 1** <sup>12</sup> **Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of God's people began to obey the message from YaHWeH their God.** When they heard the words of the prophet Haggai, whom YaHWeH their God had sent, the people feared YaHWeH. <sup>13</sup> Then Haggai, YaHWeH's messenger, gave the people this message from YaHWeH: **"I am with you, says YaHWeH!"**

**\*14a Ezra 6:14–15 (NLT)** <sup>14</sup> **So the Jewish elders continued their work, and they were greatly encouraged by the preaching of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo.** The Temple was finally finished, as had been commanded by the God of Israel and decreed by Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, the kings of Persia. <sup>15</sup> The Temple was completed on March 12, during the sixth year of King Darius's reign.

**\*15 Haggai 1** <sup>14</sup> **So YaHWeH 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 YaHWeH of hosts, their God, <sup>15</sup> on September 21 of the second year of King Darius's reign. (NASB)

**\*16 Haggai 2** <sup>1</sup> Then on October 17 of that same year, YaHWeH sent another message through the prophet Haggai. <sup>2</sup> "Say this to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest,

and to the remnant of God's people there in the land: <sup>3</sup> **'Does anyone remember this house—this Temple—in its former splendor? How, in comparison, does it look to you now? It must seem like nothing at all!**

<sup>4</sup> But now the YAHWEH says: **Be strong, Zerubbabel. Be strong, Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people still left in the land.** And now get to work, for I am with you, says YAHWEH of Heaven's Armies. <sup>5</sup> **My Spirit remains among you,** just as I promised when you came out of Egypt. So do not be afraid.' <sup>6</sup> "For this is what YAHWEH of Heaven's Armies says: *In just a little while I will again shake the heavens and the earth, the oceans and the dry land.* <sup>7</sup> *I will shake all the nations, and the treasures of all the nations will be brought to this Temple. I will fill this place with glory,* says YAHWEH of Heaven's Armies. <sup>8</sup> The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says YAHWEH of Heaven's Armies. <sup>9</sup> The future glory of this Temple will be greater than its past glory, says YAHWEH of Heaven's Armies. And in this place I will bring peace. I, YAHWEH of Heaven's Armies, have spoken!"

YaHWeH revealed another message to Haggai almost one month later, on the twenty-first day of the seventh month (Tishri, modern October 17) of the same year, 520 B.C. This was the last day of the feast of Tabernacles (Booths). Tishri was a month of feasts for the Israelites. On the first of this month they celebrated the feast of Trumpets, and on the tenth, the Day of Atonement. The feast of Tabernacles lasted seven days, and the following day was a day of rest (Lev. 23:33–44). The dedication of Solomon's temple took place 440 years earlier at the feast of Tabernacles (1 Kings 8:2), so that was probably the reason the YaHWeH gave it to Haggai on this day. Tom Constable

**\*17 Haggai 2** <sup>2</sup> "Say this to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of God's people there in the land: <sup>3</sup> **'Does anyone remember this house—this Temple—in its former splendor? How, in comparison, does it look to you now? It must seem like nothing at all!**

**\*17a** **Ezra 3:12–13 (NLT)** <sup>12</sup> But many of the older priests, Levites, and other leaders who had seen the first Temple wept aloud when they saw the new Temple's foundation. The others, however, were shouting for joy. <sup>13</sup> The joyful shouting and weeping mingled together in a loud noise that could be heard far in the distance.

Of course, the plight of the people was due to their sins, but this was still no reason for looking back. In God's work, we must look ahead in faith. Warren Wiersbe

**\*18 Haggai 2** <sup>4</sup> But now YaHWeH says: Be strong, Zerubbabel. Be strong, Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people still left in the land. And now get to work, for I am with you, says YaHWeH of Heaven's Armies. <sup>5</sup> My Spirit remains among you, just as I promised when you came out of Egypt. **So do not be afraid.'**

"Undoubtedly fear gripped many of the returnees—fear that God had written an eternal **'Ichabod'** ("The glory is gone" 1 Samuel 4:21) over Jerusalem, fear that no amount of praying or piety

would induce him to bless them again, fear that the whole endeavor was in vain, fear that the political enemies would in fact win, fear that all was lost.” Alden

**\*18a** Be strong . . . now get to work, for I am with you. We must be people of prayer, Bible study, and worship, but eventually we must get out and do the work God has in mind for us. He wants to change the world through us, his ambassadors. God has given you a job to do in the church, at your place of employment, and at home. Has the time now come for you to be strong? Get going because God is with you! Life Application Bible

**\*19 Haggai 2:6–7 (NIV84)** <sup>6</sup> “This is what YaHWeH Almighty says: ‘In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. <sup>7</sup> I will shake all nations (Daniel 11 – Persia-Rome), **and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,**’ says YaHWeH Almighty.

**\*19a** Haggai quoted in Hebrews: **Hebrews 12:26–29 (NLT)** <sup>26</sup> When God spoke from Mount Sinai his voice shook the earth, but now he makes another promise: **“Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also.”** <sup>27</sup> This means that all of creation will be shaken and removed, so that only unshakable things will remain.

The treasures of all the nations (literally “the treasures”, or “that which is choice”) has two possible meanings: (1) **It could refer to the Messiah, Jesus**, who, some 500 years later, would enter the Temple and fill it with His glory and His peace ( Luke 2:27, 32 ). (2) It could also refer to the riches that would flow into the Temple, given as offerings to God’s people. Life Application Bible

**\*20 Haggai 2** <sup>8</sup> The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says YaHWeH of Heaven’s Armies. <sup>9</sup> The future glory of this Temple will be greater than its past glory, says YaHWeH of Heaven’s Armies. And in this place I will bring peace. I, YaHWeH of Heaven’s Armies, have spoken!”

Herod remodeled this temple in the days of Jesus and it was far beyond even Solomon’s first temple. It is estimated he spent over 1 trillion dollars in today’s money. But then...the gold and the silver are all Mine!

**\*21 Haggai 2** <sup>10</sup> On December 18 of the second year of King Darius’s reign, YaHWeH sent this message to the prophet Haggai:

**\*21a** Another prophecy came from the Lord on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month of 520 B.C. (Kislev 24, December 18). **During the two months between this prophecy and the former one (vv. 1–9), Zechariah began his ministry in Jerusalem. Zechariah 1:1 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of YaHWeH came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying,

### Holiness – both ways:

**\*22 Haggai 2** <sup>11</sup> “This is what YaHWeH of Heaven’s Armies says. Ask the priests this question about the law: <sup>12</sup> ‘If one of you is carrying some meat from a holy sacrifice in his robes and his robe happens to brush against some

bread or stew, wine or olive oil, or any other kind of food, will it also become holy?" The priests replied, "No."

**"NO"**: The people were apparently thinking that since they were working on the holy temple all that they contacted and did became holy.

**\*22a Haggai then made an application of this principle to the people for the YaHWeH.**

**Their sacrifices were unacceptable to God because they were unclean.** They should not think that contact with something holy, such as the temple they were working to complete, made them acceptable to God. They had previously been unclean, so their present sacrifices were unacceptable to God. Tom Constable

**\*23** The example given in this message (delivered in December, 520 B.C.) makes it clear that holiness will not rub off on others, but contamination will. As the people began to obey God, God promised to encourage and prosper them. But they needed to understand that activities in the Temple would not clean up their sin; only repentance and obedience could do that. **If we insist on harboring wrong attitudes and sins, we will be defiled. Holy living will come only when we are empowered by God's Holy Spirit to live for Him.** Life Application Bible

**To impart holiness is impossible:** To impart holiness to another person is impossible since holiness is an inward condition of the heart. A person's heart is made holy only by the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, and that is the gift of God. Holiness cannot be communicated to our inner life by external things such as church attendance, baptism, confirmation, and observance of certain rituals or moral living. God can use these things to bring us to faith in Christ, who alone can cleanse the heart through the gift of the Holy Spirit and bring us into holiness of life. **Peter Williams**

**\*24 Haggai 2** <sup>13</sup> Then Haggai asked, "If someone becomes ceremonially unclean by touching a dead person and then touches any of these foods, will the food be defiled?" And the priests answered, "Yes." <sup>14</sup> Then Haggai responded, "That is how it is with this people and this nation, says YaHWeH. **Everything they do and everything they offer is defiled by their sin.** <sup>15</sup> **Look at what was happening to you before you began to lay the foundation of YaHWeH's Temple.** <sup>16</sup> When you hoped for a twenty-bushel crop, you harvested only ten. When you expected to draw fifty gallons from the winepress, you found only twenty. <sup>17</sup> I sent blight and mildew and hail to destroy everything you worked so hard to produce. Even so, you refused to return to me, says YaHWeH.

**"YES"**: How easily the smallest sin defiles us! This amplifies the danger of harboring sin in our lives and thinking that by going to church that that will make everything OK. Sin defiles; and just going to church or reading your Bible doesn't clean that defilement. You must repent and turn from everything that gives you an uneasy conscience.

**\*25** The principle states that to spread defilement and sinfulness is much easier than to spread holiness and virtue. In a world like ours, which is fallen and full of evil and temptation, it is so easy to become spiritually polluted on the inside of our lives. In the world of mass media, and in other ways, there are people who are out deliberately to corrupt and pollute the minds of others and to desecrate everything that is clean and wholesome. They do it by the books and newspaper articles they write, the films they produce, the TV programs they make, the songs they compose and sing, the life-styles they lead, and the teaching they impart. Peter Williams

**\*26** **1 John 1:6–10 (NIV84)** <sup>6</sup> If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. <sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

**Doing good doesn't "erase" doing evil – repentance brings God's forgiveness and then we will do good because the Lord is with us.**

**Haggai 2** <sup>18</sup> "Think about this eighteenth day of December, the day when the foundation of YaHWeH's Temple was laid. Think carefully. <sup>19</sup> I am giving you a promise now while the seed is still in the barn. You have not yet harvested your grain, and your grapevines, fig trees, pomegranates, and olive trees have not yet produced their crops. ***But from this day onward I will bless you.***"

So when the people began to obey the Lord – the blessings began to flow!

God will bless His people for their obedience, but sometimes He will not erase the punishment that previous sins have made necessary. Sin always brings death (Rom. 6:23). Sometimes that punishment must run its course before blessing can begin. Tom Constable

**Haggai 2** <sup>20</sup> On that same day, December 18, YaHWeH sent this second message to Haggai: <sup>21</sup> **"Tell Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, that I am about to shake the heavens and the earth. <sup>22</sup> I will overthrow royal thrones and destroy the power of foreign kingdoms.** I will overturn their chariots and riders. The horses will fall, and their riders will kill each other.

**Zerubbabel was the appointed governor over the province of Judah. "He was the lineal descendant of the royal house, the heir to the throne of David, through Solomon. This is a most significant fact."** (Adeney)

**\*27 Haggai 2** <sup>23</sup> "But when this happens, says YaHWeH of Heaven's Armies, I will honor you, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, my servant. **I will make you like a signet ring on My finger, says YaHWeH, for I have chosen you. I, YaHWeH of Heaven's Armies, have spoken!"**



**1 Chronicles 3:10–20 (NLT)** <sup>10</sup> **The descendants of Solomon** were Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, <sup>11</sup> Jehoram, Ahaziah, Joash, <sup>12</sup> Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, <sup>13</sup> Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, <sup>14</sup> Amon, and Josiah. <sup>15</sup> The sons of Josiah were Johanan (the oldest), Jehoiakim (the second), Zedekiah (the third), and Jehoahaz (the fourth). <sup>16</sup> The successors of Jehoiakim were his son Jehoiachin and his brother Zedekiah. <sup>17</sup> The sons of Jehoiachin, who was taken prisoner by the Babylonians, were **Shealtiel**, <sup>18</sup> Malkiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah. <sup>19</sup> The sons of Pedaiah were **Zerubbabel** and Shimei. The sons of Zerubbabel were Meshullam and Hananiah. **(Their sister was Shelomith.)** <sup>20</sup> His five other sons were Hashubah, Ohel, Berekiah, Hasadiah, and Jushab-hesed.

**Luke 3:27 (NLT)** <sup>27</sup> Joda was the son of Joanan. Joanan was the son of Rhesa. Rhesa was the son of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the son of Neri.

**Matthew 1:12 (NLT)** <sup>12</sup> After the Babylonian exile: Jehoiachin was the father of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.

**\*28 SO what do we learn from Haggai’s messages? God has called you to walk with Him until Jesus returns.** Have you given up on the work of growing in the Lord? Are you discouraged?

Then beware of these sins that hinder the work of the Lord: putting self ahead of God; looking back instead of ahead; unconfessed sin; unbelief. Set your heart to obey God’s word and His Spirit each day.

Pray for God to change your priority from one of making money or advancing your own little “kingdom” to advancing GOD’s Kingdom in your sphere of influence. Honor Him in all you do, with your time, possessions; your very life.

But notice the wonderful promises God gives us: “I am with you” (1:13); “Fear not” (2:5); “I will bless you” (2:19); “I have chosen you” (2:23).

Claim the promise of **Phil. 1:6** “...He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” and set your heart to the work of growing in Christ. Set your heart to be a disciple, a student, a learner, from Jesus – not just a “fan”!