

Minor Prophet Series – Part 3

Haggai

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Good Morning, today we are continuing our series on the Minor Prophets. We will be covering the central themes of the book of Haggai. I have to tell you from the beginning that this book messed with me this week.

You can open the book of Haggai chapter one. While your turning there, I'd like to give you some context for this book. If you can also find Ezra chapter 1, we will read a bit from there as well.

Biblical history

Exile

Bible table of contents and actual timeline

3 waves

1. Zerubbabel and Joshua – altar and temple

2. Ezra – religious and social reform

3. Nehemiah – City walls

Haggai and Zachariah

Ezra and Nehemiah

Ezra 1

1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:

2 “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

3 Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem.

4 And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.”

5 Then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem.

“The Lord stirred up the spirit” remember that.

About 50,000 people left Babylon and returned to Jerusalem.

This was roughly 1000 miles. About from here to Orlando FL.

This was certainly a great move of God.

According to Ezra chapter 3 the people settled in and got to work rebuilding the altar and they began to sacrifice the burnt offerings according to the law.

6 On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord, though the foundation of the Lord’s temple had not yet been laid.

8 In the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak and the rest of the people (the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work.

Chapter 4 tells us there was opposition to the rebuilding and the temple of God remained untouched for almost 17 years.

Ezra 5

1 Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a descendant of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them.

2 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jozadak set to work to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

1) Great moves of God require people with the right priorities.

Haggai 1

1 In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest:

2 This is what the Lord Almighty says: “These people say, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord’s house.’”

3 Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: 4 “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?”

Little bit of sarcasm here...the people had neglected the work. They had stopped building. It was the entire reason God has brought them back, so why did they stop?

Paneled houses

They were concerned with their own comfort, isn't it nice to know that selfishness is not a new problem?

They had even spiritualized their laziness, "The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house."

It's interesting the things we say... "That's impossible, well it is Monday so, kids, she's just a girl, that's how guys are, well never been able to, first service is just practice, nobody will know..."

Story and father son, I am what I am.

It's a verbal rut, that becomes a lifestyle rut, you get stuck saying the same things over and over again and so you end up doing the same things over and over again.

It would be an amazing use of your time to think about the things that you say and ask yourself why you say them. What I think we would find is that we are exactly like the Jewish people. We make excuses so we can get what we want.

Can we be honest? Guess what got built? The altar. We want the altar built because without the altar we aren't forgiven and if we aren't forgiven, we can't get to heaven.

Building the altar serves me. Building the temple only serves God.

We have been talking about consumer Christianity for years. It's crazy that this was a problem back then.

This is what the writer of Hebrews is talking about.

Hebrews 5:11-14

11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

You stopped growing, making costly investments in your personal growth and in your children's growth as a Christian and a leader in the faith. You stopped giving your time, energy, and resources to the things of God. And if you do, you give those things in marginal.

We like the altar but not the temple. I'll go to church, but I won't serve. I'll attend but I won't give.

The problem with messages like these is that we have many incredibly generous people in our church. Generous with their time, talent, money. During a message like this it's the people who are all in who feel convicted. It's the people who are tuned out because they have their lines in their heads that justify their actions.

5 Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways.

6 You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."

7 This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. 8 Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the Lord. 9 "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the Lord Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house.

God says, "I haven't blessed what you have done because you haven't put me first. Get to work on the things of God. Climb the mountain and cut down a tree and build my house".

2) Great moves of God require people to obey the voice of the Lord.

12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the Lord their God had sent him. And the people feared the Lord.

3) Great moves of God require the presence of God and the stirring of his spirit.

13 Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, gave this message of the Lord to the people: "I am with you," declares the Lord. 14 So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty, their God, 15 on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month.

The greatest promise on the bible is that God will be with you.

4) Great moves of God are full of promises for this generation and the generations to come.

Chapter 2 1-9

Some of the people are discouraged because the temple didn't look anything like the original. God encourages them.

4 ... For I am with you,' declares the Lord Almighty. 5 'This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.'

7 I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord Almighty. 8 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty. 9 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the Lord Almighty."

The great people of faith lived for God in faith, many didn't see the promises fulfilled in their lifetime. But they trusted anyway, they invested anyway.

5) Great moves of God require people with humble and holy hearts.

Chapter 2:10- 19

Haggai has a conversation with priests and ask them a question, "if you touch a dead body and become ceremonially unclean and then touch some food, does the food become unclean also?" The answer is yes and that's what the priests said. Haggai uses this question as a picture for the priest to describe the heart condition of the exiled people.

God is always concerned about our hearts.

14 Then Haggai said, "'So it is with this people and this nation in my sight,' declares the Lord. 'Whatever they do and whatever they offer there is defiled.

God is making sure that the people do not miss the point that it is about having a pure heart before the Lord.

19 "'From this day on I will bless you.'"

Closing Song – Heal our land