

Building the House of Prayer: A Prophetic Call to Action

Haggai 2

Haggai the prophet gave four prophetic words. It is only a two-chapter book. It is a very, very little book. Haggai has four prophecies. Those four prophecies were given to the people of God in Jerusalem in 520 BC; they were actually given in a four-month period. They were given in context to strengthen them in their understanding and resolve to build the house of prayer in their generation. It was a very historic year in Israel's history—520 BC

THE CONTEXT OF REBUILDING THE HOUSE OF PRAYER, 536–515 BC

Roman numeral I. In 520 BC, Haggai the prophet was prophesying with his friend, Zechariah. They were contemporaries both in the city of Jerusalem at the same time in 520 BC; they were prophesying specifically to strengthen the building of the house of prayer. I am giving you this handout with these notes; we are not going to cover all the notes, but I want you to have the verses, the dates, and the names. It is a short handout—only four pages. It is easy enough to learn the dates and the names. The drama that unfolded centuries ago is the same storyline that many houses of prayer are experiencing all around the earth today. The prophetic word that God gave His people instructing them to build the house of prayer in that hour is the same prophetic word that He is giving to His people today to build the house of prayer in this end-time hour. It is a very dramatic story.

We are talking about the dramatic story of rebuilding the house of prayer in the days of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah. The story of Zechariah, Haggai, and what they said provides powerful encouragement to anybody building the house of prayer in this hour because we see our story in their story. The thing that stirs me is that many people who are committed to serving full-time as intercessory missionaries building the house of prayer are unfamiliar with these passages of scripture. Haggai is only two chapters with four prophecies. We need to know this story well because part of our story is connected to it.

JEREMIAH PROPHESED ISRAEL'S SEVENTY-YEAR CAPTIVITY FROM 606-536 BC

The drama that we are going to focus on in 520 BC started when God told Jeremiah some seventy years earlier that the nation of Israel was going to go into captivity in Babylon for seventy years. This was a negative word when he gave it, but it was a very positive word seventy years later when it came to pass. He says, "You are going to go into captivity."

They said, "No, we do not receive that word."

He said, "But after seventy years, you will return." The generation that heard that did not like it. However, seventy-plus years later when it was ready to be fulfilled, that was the word that they really hung onto. Let's read it. Jeremiah 29:10: "For thus says the LORD: after seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place." There will be a visitation of the Spirit. God promises here to perform good work toward them, so that they can return back to this place. He was in the city of Jerusalem; my opinion is that he is actually pointing to the temple site, "You will return right back to this place, and you will build the house of prayer again." Again, he is telling them that they are going to go to Babylon, which is modern day Iraq and was 700 miles away. He was saying, "You are going to go to work camps. You are going to go to slave camps for seventy years." They did not appreciate this word. However, God also promised: "But I am going to visit you"—that is the key phrase in Jeremiah 29:10.

Seventy-plus years later, when the visitation of the Lord came, it had the mark of the Holy Spirit in the visitation. However, the visitation had tremendous human dynamics, troubles, and problems mixed into it as well. It was as if God was saying, “If You think I am going to visit You, you might be tempted to think everything will be easy and good because it is a visitation from Me.” But when we read Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra, we find out that in the midst of the visitation, the work was very difficult.

The challenges were real, and they were great; but the visitation that the Holy Spirit released in that hour of history was unusual, and many of them could not see the visitation. Those who did, some of them even became discouraged in the midst of that season of visitation. From God’s point of view, the building of the temple was the building of the house of prayer. From God’s point of view, the temple was the house of prayer. Its purpose was first and foremost to be a place of encounter. It was to be a worship sanctuary where singers would lead night and day.

NIGHT-AND-DAY WORSHIP IN THE TEMPLE

In the days of David and then in Solomon’s temple, David’s son, Solomon built a building; then, the singers went night and day. The temple was to be a worship sanctuary where the presence of God was released where the people of God could pray and encounter God. That was at the core of God’s mind when He told them to build the temple. Isaiah was the first one in the Bible to call the temple the house of prayer in Isaiah 56:7. The Lord is speaking prophetically through Isaiah, “Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Isaiah was talking clearly about the temple.

In Matthew 21:13, Jesus quotes Isaiah when He was in the temple. It says that Jesus went into the temple and made it clear when Jesus said: “And He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.’” In that Jewish context, Jesus was actually talking about the temple being a worship sanctuary where the presence of God could be experienced, and the people would encounter God in worship and prayer.

THREE PASSAGES, FOUR LEADERS: ZERUBBABEL, JOSHUA, HAGGAI, AND ZECHARIAH

The dramatic story that I want you to be familiar with, as it is part of your story, is these three passages of scripture. First of all, I want you to study Ezra 1-6. I encourage you to read Ezra 1-6. Read it a number of times. Mark it. Get familiar with it. It was what happened to the Jewish remnant when they began to build the house of prayer. They had a good beginning—the visitation of God; they became discouraged and actually quit for sixteen years after they signed up. The very group that signed up drew back in discouragement and quit. After sixteen years, God raised up Zechariah and Haggai, the two prophets, and they began to declare the purpose of God. It broke off the spirit of slumber, the spirit of discouragement, and these prophecies had such power on the hearts of these workers, and they rose up to complete the task.

That is why we want to know these prophecies. What would God say if He were going to encourage people not to quit in the building of the house of prayer? I can tell you what He would say: Haggai 1, Haggai 2, and Zechariah 3-8. That is what God would say. If God has said it and it is in the Bible, why would we not make it a priority to be familiar with these passages in an intimate way? The story is told in three passages: Ezra 1-6, Haggai 1-2, Zechariah 1-8, but in particular chapter 3-8.

ZERUBBABEL

There are four leaders who God raised up in Israel in Jerusalem in that hour in 520 BC. They were raised up before that. However, there were four leaders in the city working together. Zerubbabel: he is the governor who was in a political position, but he is a spiritual man and spiritual leader. He functioned as the apostolic leader over the entire divine commission to build a house of prayer in that generation.

JOSHUA

Then there was Joshua. He was the high priest. He was responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the community that led worship. The singers and the musicians were the Levites, which were the priests, as not all Levites were singers and musicians. From a biblical point of view, all the singers and musicians who are mentioned are Levites. Joshua: his responsibility was to mobilize and oversee the day-to-day function of the teams who led in the worship inside of the temple. Not just the singing and the music, but he also oversaw the offering of the sacrifice that were pictures of Jesus' death, resurrection, and His ministry. Joshua oversaw that function as well with the priests.

HAGGAI

Then, the other two guys: Haggai is an older prophet. He gave four messages in a period of four months. It is late August to late December in 520 BC. We are going to look at his second message, which was given on October 17, 520 BC. That one has a peculiar relevance to us right now in this hour. We are going to look at that in just a few moments. We are going to look at that specific message.

ZECHARIAH

Then the fourth leader was Zechariah. He was a younger prophet. His longest prophecy is perhaps the longest prophecy in the Bible in terms of a prophecy given in one singular setting. We do not know many settings the book of Revelation was given to John. It is believable that John had several encounters, so John put them all together in one book. We do not know for sure. However, in terms of one night of prophecy, I do not know of any other prophecy given in the Word of God that is equal in terms of length to what Zechariah received on that one glorious night in January 519 BC.

It is just a month after Haggai was done. Haggai gives his four words in August, September, October, November, December, and now he is done. Then, the young prophet comes in, and in one night, Zechariah has this amazing impartation of the Holy Spirit and gets eight visions in one night. They all affect the house of prayer, but several of them were specific to encourage the building of the house of prayer in that hour in 520 BC.

TWO PERSIAN KINGS HELPED THE JEWS RETURN TO ISRAEL

There are two Persian kings in the story: King Cyrus and King Darius. You can read those details later. Let's get a short overview of the story: the Jewish people have been in captivity for seventy years; they are 700 miles from home in Babylon, again, which is modern day Iraq, for seventy years. Most of the people were born and raised in the work camps, which were very difficult conditions to live in. A few guys were maybe five and ten years old when they were put in the camps; seventy years later, they are in their eighties. Now, they actually remember what it was like in Jerusalem. It is about a five-month walk, or 700 miles to get there. The seventy years are up that Jeremiah prophesied: "You will be in this slave camp for seventy years." The Holy Spirit moved on King Cyrus and said, "Any of the Jews who want to go back to Jerusalem, and you can go. You are free." 50,000 of them out of potentially a million Jews were now in the work camps at that time. Nobody knows the exact number of Jews; different sources have different numbers, but that is a number that you will run into.

OVERVIEW OF THE STORY

Roman numeral II. Out of over a million Jews, 50,000 Jews were in work camps. These 50,000 Jews say, “I want to go back, walk five months, 700 miles, and I want to go the broken, desolate city is Jerusalem.” Remember, seventy years earlier, when the Babylonian army took them captive and brought them to Babylon, the army also burned the city and tore it down, so the city was desolate. It was a heap of ruins. When you think of the temple, think of a big building like a municipal auditorium. When the Babylonian army came in seventy years ago and tore it down, stones were laid everywhere. It was significant work to put that building back together. It was a gigantic task. It was not just that they were going to come back home and have prayer meetings; they were going to build the city and rebuild this massive structure.

Of course, they did not have architectural school. They have been in slave camps. They did not have good tools. They did not have the knowledge. They were slaves, in essence, as they were workers earning minimum wage. They were going to go back to build a city and this building. Then they were going to put singers and musicians in place. This was a daunting task in the natural, but they said yes to it. After about a year, it was a little bit longer than a year—a few months longer—their excitement was gone. They were going strong for about a year, or one to two years. They were full of faith; they walked five months. They finally came to the city of Jerusalem and saw this desolate city. They said, “Oh, no. It is worse than we thought.” I can imagine them coming up over the hill and thinking, “Jerusalem! We love Jerusalem—oh, my!”

In about the second year, they just lose their enthusiasm. We can relate to that. We know what it means to get prepared, take a long time, hear the word of the Lord, get your house in order, move to Kansas City, and build the house of prayer. It is exciting, and it is scary; you are ready to go. About a year or two into it, it is like, “Oh, man. Those 6am prayer meetings are hard.” Laying a foundation in the temple is difficult. They did not build the structures, just the foundation. That is a massive job, by the way. Then, the enemies around about them were causing trouble. They had economic and agricultural crisis going on as well. They had lots of problems. They had enemies everywhere.

THE SAMARITANS AGGRESSIVELY OPPOSED THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL

Remember that when the population was deported to Babylon, the surrounding nations said, “Hey, free land, free houses, and free fields. Let’s move in, and take over their farms and their houses.” Now it is seventy years later, and these Samaritans do not want to leave. They say, “We have been here seventy years, you have been far away. This is our farm; it is not your farm.” So you can imagine the conflict.

The two most important years to remember in this story: 536 BC—that is when they laid the foundation. Then, they get discouraged because of the opposition: the agricultural and economic crisis. There was an economic crisis going on in the land. How many of you know that God is going to build the house of prayer on the earth in the midst of economic crisis? In the midst of agricultural crisis, He will build it. You wait and see.

BECAUSE OF OPPOSITION, THEY QUIT FOR SIXTEEN YEARS (536–520 BC)

They quit for sixteen years. Now it is 520 BC, and God raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, and they go to their main leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua, all the people, and they said, “Rise up and build the house. Rise up and build the house. Rise up and build the house.” After sixteen years of discouragement, they cast off their discouragement. They set about the task of building the house of prayer, building the temple, and they completed it. The Lord was pleased.

THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL STRUGGLED WITH SPIRITUAL LETHARGY AND COMPROMISE

There are three main obstacles in the city of Jerusalem. First of all, the Samaritans, the people who took over the Jewish homes, farms, and land, they did not want to leave. Then, there was the remnant of Israel themselves, the 50,000 who walked 700 miles for five months. This remnant themselves became spiritually lethargic before they got there. They were fired up. Then, they said yes. When it came down to doing it day by day, spiritual lethargy and passivity crept in.

“Well, you know, it is too much work. It is not worth it,” became the grumbling of the Israelites. That became the predominant word: “It is not worth the hassle.” Spiritual lethargy crept in where they could not see the purpose that God was accomplishing in the building of the house of prayer. They could not see it anymore, as they had lost sight of the big picture. That is what we are going to really focus on in just a moment—the big picture. Not only did they have spiritual lethargy saying, “It is not worth it; the work is too hard,” but they got into compromise in their own lives. They found themselves compromising in sin in their individual lives.

Zechariah had to come and call them to repent not just of lethargy but also of compromise in their private lives. They had some secret things going on all on the inside. The other thing that came was resistance and fear. They began to be afraid that it would not work. “The enemies are too big. The Lord will not help us. His presence will not be with us.” They had all kinds of fears. This is exactly the issue that the prayer movement on the earth today is dealing with. Then, they had the economic crisis that was intensified by draught and agricultural crisis.

EZRA 1-6: SIGNIFICANT EVENTS (538-515 BC)

Roman numeral III. In Ezra 1-6, we see the story unfold. The significant events are right there. Again, you want to know these six chapters. I encourage you to read Ezra 1-6 maybe once a week for a month, or longer. You want to get to know these chapters. Part of our story is found in that storyline. This could be true of anyone building a house of prayer across the earth. Of course, it is true of anybody in ministry, anywhere in the Church, but they were actually building a worship sanctuary. They were building the buildings, but more than that, they were organizing people to actually have night and day worship ascending to God out of those buildings too.

IN 538, KING CYRUS, THE KING OF PERSIA, DEFEATED THE NATION OF BABYLON

It is 538 BC; King Cyrus of Persia defeated the nation of Babylon. Persia, which is modern day Iran, defeated Babylon, which is modern day Iraq. Back in the ancient world, it was Iran verses Iraq, which is the same story today. The king of Iran (Persia) defeats the king of Iraq (Babylon); so he puts his government in Babylon. The Holy Spirit moves on this Persian king. He was an Iranian king using today’s grid.

The Lord moves on him through the Holy Spirit; just like Jeremiah said, “I will visit you.” Ezra 1:1-6: “Now 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, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Who 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 build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem. Then the heads of the fathers’ houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. And all those who were around them

encouraged them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.”

KING CYRUS MADE A SUPRISING DECREE TO FREE THE JEWISH CAPTIVES

God first visited this pagan king. God promised to build a house in Jerusalem. That is 700 miles away. The Persians, the Babylonians, and all the other nations that he had conquered were confused, but the Jewish remnant said, “We knew it because God said he would visit us after seventy years.”

Right there at the seventy-year mark, the visitation of God comes, the Holy Spirit moves on this king; so God makes this absolutely astounding announcement that an Iranian king is going to build a house of prayer in Jerusalem for the God of Israel. How many of you know that would encourage you if you saw that happen on a global level? He proclaimed this.

Here we have the world proclamation in Ezra 1:1-6. We will read just a little bit of this. I encourage you to read this on your own, but I want you to feel the drama. He had been a king before that starting in 550 BC. He had been a king for some time, for about twelve years before that. Jeremiah prophesied that in seventy years, the Lord stirred the spirit of an ungodly king. How many of you know God can stir the spirit of authority figures in finance, military, and government? God can stir the spirit to build His house. He is doing that in these days, but we are going to see it more in the days to come. The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. He made this shocking proclamation throughout his whole empire, which was the largest empire in history at that time. No empire had ever been larger than his.

KING CYRUS EVEN HELPED FINANCIALLY

He says in Ezra 1:2: “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He commanded me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.” The king wanted all the kingdoms of the earth to know that God commanded him to build a house in Jerusalem. He makes this worldwide announcement; I cannot get over this.

Imagine the exiles, or the remnant of Israel: they are in the camps; they are so excited. It is too good to be true. It is exactly what Jeremiah said. He even gave money to them, in Ezra 1:3-5. It is as if the king said, “I will let every Jewish person go back if you want to;” 50,000 could return! We are talking about the Jewish remnant, when God stirred their spirit, so they could return to Jerusalem. Here is what the story tells us: the stirring of the spirit of the individual is real, but it did not stay steady. The people did not follow through with it. They were stirred. It was not make believe. It was not emotionalism. It was truly the stirring of the Lord in that hour in Babylon. It was real. You think of the time when God said, “I want you to build the house of prayer full-time.” It does not matter what city it is in. The calling is real. The marking is real. The stirring is real, but that does not mean it will be easy. That does not mean that everybody will follow through to the end faithfully, but the stirring is real.

ABOUT 50,000 RETURNED FROM BABYLON TO HELP BUILD THE HOUSE OF PRAYER

The number 50,000 can find the number there in Ezra 2. They were not just building a building where they offer sacrifices; it is a worship sanctuary. It is not a building; rather it is people who are mobilized to offer up night and day worship with singers and musicians. I want you to know that. It is more than a “church building,” but when I say worship sanctuary, I am talking about the people were mobilized into a worship community. I am talking about the people themselves became the sanctuary of the Lord that gathered collectively.

FULL-TIME SINGERS AND MUSICIANS IN THE DAYS OF ZERUBBABEL

They offered up prayers night and day before the Lord. Let's read this in Nehemiah 12:45: "Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their God and the charge of the purification according to the command of David and Solomon his son." The gatekeepers in our context would be all the support ministries. There are the singers, musicians, and everybody else who keeps the lights on, the money flowing, the parking lots working, the plumbing working—all that are involved in keeping that prayer sanctuary going.

Of course, they quit for sixteen years, but once they signed up the second time; they stayed true to the end of their lives. Nehemiah 12:47: "In the days of Zerubbabel," the governor, "and in the days of Nehemiah," which was almost 100 years later, "all of Israel gave the portions for the singers and the gatekeepers, a portion for each day. They also gave consecrated holy things for the Levites, and the Levites consecrated them for the children of Aaron." They gave money to keep the singers going. They gave money to keep the gatekeepers, or the support ministries going every day.

TWO HUNDRED FULL-TIME SINGERS AND MUSICIANS

In other words, that is a way of saying that the finances were in place for full-time singers and full-time musicians. Look at the next verse in Ezra 2:65: "There had two hundred men and women singers." Some of them were men and some of them were women—200 total. We have found here at the ten-year mark at the house of prayer, it takes—this is remarkable—it takes 200 full-time singers, musicians, and sound techs to keep the prayer room going twenty-four seven. Two hundred is not a magic number, but when I look at that number as a builder of the house of prayer, I say, "You know what? That is a practical number." We thought we could do it with 100, and you can for a year or two, but then everybody starts getting weary. It takes about 200 full-time singers and musicians and another 100 or so. If we did not have any outreaches, which you know we have many, but if we had none of those, it would take another 100 just to keep the lights on, the plumbing going, and the finances working in a proper way.

At the ten-year mark, I look back and say, "It takes about 300 full-time people to sustain a twenty-four seven worship sanctuary with full worship teams going night and day." You can do it with less numbers for a year or two. But their legs will start getting weary after a while. If you were going to sustain it for a decade, I would guess it would take about 200 singers, musicians, and sound techs. It would require another 100 people, or so to keep things running smoothly.

THE KING OF PERSIA GAVE FROM THE ROYAL TREASURY TO SUPPORT THE SINGERS

Look at this, the king of Persia, in Nehemiah 11:23: "For it was the king's command concerning them that a certain portion should be for the singers, a quota day by day." This was not just Zerubbabel's command, or just King David's command from generations past; this was the king's command concerning the Jews in Jerusalem that a certain portion of the money would be for the singers.

The unbelieving king said, "I am going to make sure they have enough money to function full-time, a quota for each day, enough for a full day's work." They are now in the first year. It is the seventh month of the first year. They built the altar, not the foundation, just the altar to offer some sacrifices. The foundation is a bigger job than just building the altar. Some months pass, and they laid the foundation. Remember: it is a building, not exactly, but think of municipal auditorium. They had to get the foundation in place. They did not get the whole foundation done, but they did get a bit of the foundation. We find out through other verses that the foundation is not finished in the full sense in 536 BC

Look at this, here they are in the second year, they are still pretty excited. The troubles are beginning to increase, but they are still pretty excited. They laid the foundation. They have not built the building yet, just the foundation, and they are singing in the open air.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE TEMPLE WAS BUILT, AND THEY CELEBRATED

Ezra 3:10-13: “When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: ‘For He is good, For His mercy endures forever toward Israel.’ Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers’ houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off.”

Ezra 3:11 is about antiphonal singing. One group would sing, the other group would answer them. King David is the one who taught them the antiphonal singing because around the throne of heaven, that is how they do it. They mix the singing, the proclamation, and different companies around the throne are interacting together in total unity before the throne. David picked up on that, and here Zerubbabel sets this into place. Now the trouble starts increasing.

ADVERSARIES AROSE AGAINST THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE IN 535 BC

You can read in Ezra 4:1-5: the adversaries heard that the Jews were building the house of prayer. After a while, the people hear, the news gets out, and the people of the land—the adversaries—wanted to discourage the Jews. They troubled them. They did anything they could to create rumors and troubles and frustrations. They even hired counsellors to think of crafty ways to frustrate them by lies, rumors, and all kinds of ways to stop them. Look Ezra 4:24: “Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of reign of Darius king of Persia.” This is one of the saddest moments of the story.

God stirred Cyrus’ spirit, Isaiah and Jeremiah both prophesied about it, Daniel went on fasting and prayer related to it, yet the work still ceased, and it discontinued for sixteen years. After sixteen years, God sent prophets. God will always stir through the prophetic spirit. When God is commissioning a sovereign worship sanctuary that is going to go on night and day, there will always be the need of the prophetic word to strengthen them because they could not shake off the discouragement without the new, fresh, powerful word from God. We have the written Word of God that is prophetic, and we have the contemporary, subjective words that God gives the different prophets. Dreams, visions, and the prophetic strengthen our hands in the work.

AFTER SIXTEEN YEARS, GOD SENT PROPHETS TO STIR UP THE LEADERS TO BUILD

In Ezra 5:1-2, it is sixteen years later, as it is now 520 BC. This is the key year, 520 BC, when the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to the Jews in Judah. Ezra 5:1-2: “Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of God of Israel, who was over them. So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.” Jeshua was the same man as Joshua; they rose up. Is that not awesome? When the prophets prophesy, the leaders rise up, and they shake off the slumber. They begin to build the house of God, the temple, and the house

of prayer. It is what God calls the temple, or the house of prayer. The prophets of God were with them and the prophets of God were helping them.

AFTER FIVE YEARS OF BUILDING, THEY BUILT THE HOUSE OF PRAYER

Ezra 6: it gives the end of the story. You can read that on your own. They built for five more years; they are building the actual temple complex. They completed the temple complex, which was the external building of the house of prayer. This was the internal ministry of worship, functioning as a worship sanctuary. God commissioned a worship sanctuary night and day; it continued far beyond the five years it took to build. Again, I am going through this quickly, but I want to familiarize you with the story for those who are new with us. I have shared this throughout the years, but I want us all to know this story well. Not just so you can preach it and say it, but so you can think about it when you are in the prayer room, or before the Lord. I draw from these passages regularly to strengthen my heart.

HAGGAI'S PROPHETIC MESSAGES IN 520 BC: A CALL TO ACTION

Roman numeral IV. Now the prophet Haggai: he is the older prophet. He has four messages from late August to late December. Each of the prophecies are actually identified by the exact day. Commentators today significantly agree—though there is always one guy who disagrees—but the vast majority agree on the actual day in the Julian calendar, in our calendar, in the Western calendar. We know the exact days. The prophecy that I am going to focus in on was Haggai's second one.

It was on October 17, 520 BC, but all four of them were in a four-month period of time. We need all four words constantly. Let's look at it. I only have it in abbreviated form here. It says here, in verse 3, this is Haggai. Remember they have quit for sixteen years, now they are stirred up. They are ready to go to work. They come to the temple site, and they have been at it for a month or two. They have been going hard for about a month. When you read the other prophecies of Haggai, they have been going for about a month, technically about six weeks. They are ready to go.

Haggai says in 2:3: "Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?" There are a number of points to make here. Haggai, the older prophet comes and says, "Who remembers the old days, seventy years back?" There are some really elderly men who remember. They were just kids.

Here is the question of the day. He said, "How do you see this work right now?" They are looking at the work; they have quit for sixteen years, and they have only been engaged for six weeks. The worship teams were probably not doing great right about the six-week mark. The building is still a heap of rubble. He said, "Here is the question: What do you see when you see this heap of rubble and this broken down house of prayer? What do you see?" We will find out in a minute in Zechariah 4:10, we know, they despised it.

They looked at it and said, "It is ugly, it is not anointed, and the work is too hard, God could not possibly be interested in this." All they could see was how weak and broken it was. "Is this the visitation of God that Jeremiah promised us? Is this what it means to be in a visitation?"

Remember Jeremiah 29:10 when God promised, "I will visit you." Haggai the prophet says, "Look again, can you see anything else when you look at this broken down little temple?" They could not see anything else because in their eyes, they compared it to the former days, and it was as nothing. What Haggai is going to do is

to connect in their thinking that the temple they are building is the one that Solomon built nearly 500 years earlier. He is going to connect it. He says, "It is the same temple for 500 years, when the shekinah glory came in."

We are going to see that Haggai is going to use the word "this" when he is talking about "this temple," and he is going to use it in reference to Solomon's temple 500 years ago with the shekinah glory. He is going to use it in reference to the little broken temple that they were building in that day.

HE CONNECTS IT WITH THE MILLENNIAL WORSHIP SANCTUARY

But more than this, he is going to connect it to the millennial temple at the end of the age that Jesus built. It is the same temple, but the people of Haggai's day could not see how their efforts connected with the millennial sanctuary—the heavenly sanctuary. What the prophet was saying in essence was this: God has sovereignly established a worship sanctuary in Jerusalem. There is a worship sanctuary in heaven, the New Jerusalem, that goes twenty-four seven and never stops.

There is a millennial worship sanctuary in Jerusalem, and there is a historic one 500 years ago with David and Solomon. He said, "All you can see is how little, weak, and broken your efforts are because you do not have any sense of the continuity between what you are doing and how it connects with the heavenly worship sanctuary. You cannot see how it connects with the millennial worship sanctuary. Though it is one reality to God."

He was trying to shake them out of their slumber. Some people when they build a house of prayer, all they can see is, "Well, it is a place where we are laboring for revival." That is good. We are laboring for revival and social transformation. Other people say, "Well, that is good that we are laboring for revival, but I see the worship sanctuary as a place for personal renewal. I go in, read my Bible, and get a spirit of revelation. I feel renewed, get deliverance, get renewal, and I get touched being in His presence." To some people, the house of prayer is a personal renewal place. That is good; to other people, it is a revival center, which labors for revival. In both groups, all they can see is the house of prayer as a means to an end.

THE HOUSE OF PRAYER IS AN END IN ITSELF JUST LIKE HEAVEN

It is helping people get renewed, the believers who are inside, and it is helping the Church get revived and society be transformed. It is a means to an end. The house of prayer does affect individuals, and it impacts the Church in society, but the house of prayer is more than a means to an end. The worship sanctuary is an end in itself like it is in heaven. The end in itself is that the worth of God is declared. His supremacy is declared. That is an end in itself around the throne of heaven. The worthiness of the Lamb is declared night and day forever because his supremacy must be declared. The rocks will cry out if the saints do not declare the worth of Jesus. What Haggai is saying in our language is that there is more going on here than a personal renewal center, which is good, or merely a revival center for transformation of society, which is also good.

Those are means to an end, but this is an end in itself as well. We do not have to choose between the two; both realities are real. Beloved, God started a worship sanctuary sovereignly in Jerusalem with David. He did not have a building; he only had a tent. He put worshipers, singers, and musicians in place; they went night and day for forty years before Solomon actually built the building. They had a worship community going night and day. Why did David do that? David wanted personal renewal? Yes. In Psalm 27:4: "One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty

of the Lord and to inquire in His temple.” Yes. Do we David do this because he wanted to defeat his enemies? Yes. Did David do this because he had a revelation of the value of declaring the supremacy of the Lamb like they do in heaven?

ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN: DECLARING THE WORTH AND SUPREMACY OF JESUS

It was Jesus who said in Matthew 6:10: “On earth like it is in heaven.” It is not just that God’s government is on earth, but there would be worship on earth like there is worship in heaven. It is both. David had a vision of the continuity of his worship sanctuary. He did not have a building. He saw the continuity of his worship sanctuary with the heavenly worship sanctuary and with the millennial one. David saw the value of what he was doing in his generation. The remnant of Israel could not. They could not see that.

Haggai comes and it is as if he asks, “You realize what you are doing is bigger than this generation? It is connected to the heavenly temple, the worship sanctuary, it is connected to the millennial one.” Through the Holy Spirit, there is a divine connection between these Jerusalem worship centers and those, which were sovereignly called that, went night and day. In our context, God is sovereignly igniting and commissioning worship sanctuaries. I do not mean a Sunday morning worship service, though I love that; that is powerful. I am talking about God is sovereignly commissioning night and day worship sanctuaries all over the earth.

These worship sanctuaries: they are the not the same as the Jerusalem worship sanctuaries. However, they have a dynamic connectedness to a grand purpose. These Jerusalem worship sanctuaries are a clear picture of the worship in the age to come. Beloved, what we are doing right now has a connectedness—not just to renewal in our own lives. Sit in the prayer room, and gaze on the beauty of God. Do not just focus on the transformation of society. We are connected with every other worship sanctuary that is going night and day that God has sovereignly called. There is a calling that God gives. There is a dynamic connectedness with the worship movement. Again, I am talking about God is separating people all over the earth. They will labor together to build a sanctuary, and to keep the worship going.

When I mean build it, I do not mean the building, though buildings are important. I am talking about the worship community that offer praise night and day on earth like they do in heaven, but infinitely less glorious, of course.

God looks at them and says, “What do you see?” That is always the question of the hour: “What do you see?” IHOP-KC, what do you see when you go into a little, weak prayer room? What do you see? Do you only see what is on the stage? What is on the chairs? Do you only see the literature on the foyer? There is more to see. There is a divine connectedness with the worship center above, and there is a millennial worship center that will cover the entire earth with worship.

HAGGAI CALLED THEM TO BE STRONG AND NOT QUIT IN THE MIDST OF PRESSURE

Haggai 2:4: “Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,” says the LORD and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; ‘and be strong, all your people of the land,’ says the LORD ‘and work; for I am with you,’ says the LORD of hosts.” Now he looks and gives the word after he asked them what they saw.

EXHORTATION TO BE STRONG AND TO WORK

He gives two words in Haggai 2:4. It is as if Haggai said, “Be strong, Zerubbabel. Be strong, Joshua. Be strong, all the people who are working, and work because I am with you.” He is giving two exhortations, “Be strong

and work.” Be strong. Work. He says, “Zerubbabel, be strong.” In other words, be resolved and do not quit in the face of the difficulty. Be strong. Do not draw back, give up, or give in. Stay the course if God stirred your spirit.

Haggai looks at Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel says, “OK, I am.”

Haggai says, “No, you have only been on the job for six weeks now. You quit for sixteen years. Do not ever quit again. Do not ever quit again, if God has called you to do this.”

I am not talking in our staff context meaning full-time versus part-time—that is not what I am talking about. I am not talking about, “Well, if I had the money, I would.” I am not talking about the practicality of who does it full-time, or part-time—that is not what is on my mind. When I say be strong and do not quit, I mean pressing in, in our spirit to the purpose, and whether we are full-time, part-time, a little time, we are laying hold of it with all of our spirit. We are not drawing back with lethargy, giving up, and giving in saying, “Well, who cares if the worship sanctuary continues?” That is what I mean by being strong.

BE GRATEFUL TO WORK FOR SOMETHING THAT GOD IS ZEALOUS FOR

Zerubbabel, the leader, had one set of challenges. He looked at Joshua, who had an entirely different set of challenges, which I will not go into right now. Then he looked at the people, and they had another set of challenges. Each one of them had the same exhortation: “Be resolved. There is a worship sanctuary that God has commissioned you to build. It is connected with the heavenly one, it is connected with the millennial one, and it is connected with the historic one with David and Solomon. Get about the work, and see what is in front of you. Do not only see a desolate building with broken down structures with stones and weeds; see the big picture of what God has called you to do. Be strong; do not quit in your spirit. Keep the vision going because every single person is tempted to quit.” That is the Satan’s strategy.

Then he gives them the next exhortation: “Work. Be diligent.” The house of prayer movement, it is a worship sanctuary. God has given us a sovereign mandate to build a worship sanctuary so that renewal happens, yes; transformation will flow out of it to society, yes. However, the number one purpose is so the worth of the Lamb is declared. Yes. He said, “Build it.”

When God sovereignly says to do it, there is no option but to do it. He called us to keep a sanctuary. Many who have joined us, they came for good music, a chance to get on the stage, or a chance to improve their spiritual life. Those are good. I appreciate people wanting to be on the stage. I do not mind that. I want to help get some people on the stage. That is not bad, but there is a bigger picture going on. It is bigger than launching your worship ministry. We are a part of something that is going to fill the earth. I do not mean that every place will be twenty-four seven worship, that is not what I mean, but God will raise up strategic centers and places in the earth. I do not even mean connected to us. We are talking about the Lord who will organize it. I am not talking about as an IHOP-KC organization. I am talking about a sovereign move of God. Some of them will go twenty-four seven; some will not. Worship teams all over the earth will lead them. There is a connectedness between them to a grand worship center that is going to come in the millennial kingdom when Jesus builds His worship center that spreads out to the whole earth.

THE WHOLE EARTH WILL BE FILLED WITH THE GLORY OF GOD

The whole earth will be filled with the glory of God. There will be going night and day worship. Not just preaching and godly people filling the earth when the Lord returns; worship will fill the earth night and day, and the glory like the waters covering the sea. Habakkuk 2:14: “The glory of the Lord will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

Beloved, we are a part of that reality even now, even today. He says, “Work. Be diligent.” As a matter of fact, the work is hard. That is why they quit; the work was so hard. Satan does not want this. Beloved, it is hard. Do the work. Many say, “Well, when I signed up and saw the IHOP-KC poster, I thought, ‘Oh, that is me. I will be like David. I will go there, and I will be worshipping.’” Then you got here, and it is work. Satan is real. We are all weak and fallen people. That is how the work is done. In the midst of us weak and broken people, the work is going to be completed.

DO NOT FEAR

God promised, “I will be with you. My eyes will be on you, my hand will be with you.” Look what he said in Haggai 2:5, this is an interesting promise. He says, “According to the word I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My spirit remains among you; do not fear!” We are talking a 1,000 years earlier. This is about 500 BC; Moses was about 1,500 BC, which is just a ballpark figure. It is as if God said, “I promised 1,000 years ago. I made a covenant with you in the days of Moses.” Here is the covenant: “That my Spirit would remain with you.”

The people were saying, “Your Spirit remains with us? We do not see any evidence of your Spirit even being with us. What do you mean *remain*? We want the Spirit to show up before we concern ourselves with the Spirit remaining.”

The Lord could say, “No. There are evidences of my Spirit in your life. I am working in your life right now.” Beloved, there are so many evidences of the Holy Spirit working in our individual lives and in our corporate community. The fact that we are forgiven—that is the evidence of the Holy Spirit. We are forgiven, and we have confidence in God—that is supernatural. The fact that we do not quit, we might quit, but we keep signing back up—beloved, that is the evidence of the Holy Spirit. The fact that God keeps supplying us with supernatural direction, supernatural finance even at five until twelve midnight, but the finances still keep coming—that is evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work in us. We say, “Barely.”

But the Lord says, “It is not the Devil doing it; it is not the flesh doing it. I am doing it.” You have callings, which are also the result of the Holy Spirit’s work in your life, and the Lord would say, “I have called you. You have a relationship with me. The evidence of my Spirit is in your midst.”

Here is a question: how did you end up in this chair in this staff meeting? I mean of all the people, I have to say this just right because I do not feel pride about that. I want you to get a sense of destiny of how God is leading you. I talked to our IHOP-KC church historian, and he has studied the house of prayer movement throughout church history. He is writing a book on it. I sent out a number of emails and said, “Tell me about the house of prayer movement in the last 2,000 years.” Of course, I have studied it a bit myself. I said, “Has there ever been another worship sanctuary that has gone night and day with worship teams in 1,000 years anywhere in the earth?”

Each of them that I asked said, “No. There is no evidence of it. As a matter of fact, there are evidences of a twenty-four seven worship, singing the Psalms through the night but not with instruments.” Different ones I talked to all said the same thing. I do not know the exact information on this, but as best as we can tell an instrument-led, twenty-four seven, music and worship sanctuary—IHOP-KC may be the only one so far in 2,000 years. My point is not so you say, “Wow, didn’t we do something?” That is not my point. Before the Lord returns, there will be many of them across the earth.

My point is this: how did you get involved in this? There is something happening. Again, I do not have any pride in it at all. I am not aiming for, “Aren’t we something?” That is not my point. My point is this: whether it has been 1,000 years since worship has gone twenty-four seven, or 2,000 years with instruments, I do not know. I do not overly care about that piece of information. What I am saying is something unique has happened. Something unusual has occurred, and God called your name. God said, “I want you to put your hand to it.”

Again, before the Lord returns, they will be all over the earth. I do not mean our little version. God’s Holy Spirit version will be all over the earth; there will be a worship movement that will fill the earth that has full, dynamic connectedness to heavenly worship and to the millennial worship sanctuary that is yet to come. My point is this: God’s Spirit is remaining with us, and Haggai said, “Do not be afraid that the Spirit is going to lift. He is going to keep leading, directing, and visiting. Do not fear that you are going to get halfway out there, and God is going to abandon the worship movement. He is not. Do not fear.”

The fear is about, “Will He continue to bless, provide, and guide?” That is where the fear was, and many people have that fear. “Well, when I get older in ten, twenty, and thirty years,” and the Lord says, “Do not fear. I will remain with you.” There is a purpose bigger than personal renewal and revival. As valid as those are, I love those two purposes, I want to say over and over. You are a part of a connectedness to something in God’s heart that has been going in heaven for the ages.

It is going to be established on the earth in Jerusalem forever. God is going to fill these God-commissioned worship sanctuaries that go night and day. God is going to use these worship sanctuaries as a catalyst. They will serve as a testimony to heaven in different geographic regions around the earth. It is God’s business that He is setting these things in order.

HAGGAI 2:7: “I WILL SHAKE ALL THE NATIONS”

Look at what he says in Haggai 2:7: “and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,” says the LORD of hosts.” Then we will bring this to an end. The Lord is talking about the great tribulation leading to the millennial, “and they shall come to the desire of all nations”—that has got to be one of the best titles of Jesus in the Bible. He is called “the Desire of All Nations.” Look at this, he says, “And I will fill this temple with glory” in Haggai 2:7. He is pointing at the little temple they are working on, “I will fill this temple with glory after the heavens and the earth shake.”

They say, “This one?”

He responds, “Yes.”

They ask, “It is 520 A.D. Is this temple is going to be filled with glory?”

THE JERUSALEM HOUSE OF PRAYER IS CONNECTED WITH SOLOMON AND DAVID

In God's economy, the Jerusalem worship sanctuary was already connected historically to Solomon and David, in Revelation 4-5, and then forward to Jesus. This will be the Jesus House of Prayer, the one that He will personally sit on the throne in the earth in Jerusalem.

He said, "I will fill this temple with glory," and He points, "This little 520 BC house of prayer is the same one as that one I will sit on. Though you just cannot see it, God sees it."

Haggai 2:8, "'The silver is Mine, the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts." God is going to shake the nations; He is going to release the gold and the silver. There will be a transfer of wealth; the house of God will be built in the generation of the Lord's returns. That is the whole Church—the house of God. The great revival will take place, but now in a more specific way and in a secondary way. I am talking about house of God worship sanctuaries. The whole Body of Christ is the house of God. Beloved, God is going to shake the heavens and earth. He is going to release gold and silver, and He is going to fund worship sanctuaries that will be strategically placed across the earth that will stand as a witness to the worthiness of Lamb in the darkest and the greatest hour of human history that is yet ahead of us.

Yes, they will be renewal centers; yes, they will be used by God to release revival, but they will be prophetic testimonies when deep darkness covers the earth. They will be on earth echoing the worship that goes on in heaven, declaring the worth of the Lamb. God has called us to build a worship sanctuary.

EZEKIEL 44:15: KEEP CHARGE OF THE TEMPLE

I will end with this point: God has called us to the sign that is on the wall in the prayer room. Ezekiel 44:15: "Nevertheless I will make them keep charge of the temple, for all it work, and for all that has to be done in it." God gave a blessing to the priests of Zadok because they kept the worship sanctuary; they kept it. They put their time and energy into it; they would not let the fire go out.

The Lord says, "I am going to bless them in the age to come because they kept it back in this temporal age. In this age, they did it; I will remember it in the age to come, and I will bless them. I will bless their heritage." I was talking to a man the other day, and he asked, "What is the motivation for the house of prayer?"

I said, "It is personal renewal. It is revival. There are lots of things happening—great harvest . . . many things. Some of our worshippers have the revelation of the connectedness to a nonstop worship sanctuary, a connectedness by the Holy Spirit to the worship sanctuary in heaven and the one that is coming in the millennial kingdom. They have a revelation that there is more going on than a means to an end."

I said, "Some of these guys and gals, they would turn down a mega church position with lots of money and prominence to be in the sanctuary of the Lord building a night and day worship sanctuary. It is an issue of revelation. IHOP-KC is not just a stage to give them a chance to do a big conference, so they can launch a CD, and start a worship ministry with their worship band. That is not what IHOP-KC is to them. It has a connectedness to a heavenly millennial sanctuary like all the other worship sanctuaries throughout history do."

LEVITICUS 6:13: "A FIRE SHALL ALWAYS BE BURNING ON THE ALTAR"

I am talking about the night and day worship sanctuaries that never go out. The fire does not go out because God commissioned them sovereignly from heaven to exist. He has them for His own pleasure for His own

reasons. The issue is the Haggai 2:3 question where the prophet says, “What do you see?” It is all an issue of what you see when you build the house of prayer. Do you see a room with worshipers, and that is it? Or do you see a bigger purpose of God’s heart? I tell you: I see a bigger purpose

Let’s stand.