

## **Haggai Pt 1 Consider Your Ways**

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Haggai / Haggai 1:1-11

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# Introduction: The Remnant's Dilemma

### **Haggai 1:1-11 ESV**

<sup>1</sup> In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest:

<sup>2</sup> “Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.”

<sup>3</sup> Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet,

<sup>4</sup> “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?

<sup>5</sup> Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways.

<sup>6</sup> You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

<sup>7</sup> “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways.

<sup>8</sup> Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce.

<sup>11</sup> And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.”

In most of the other prophetic books, the prophet stands up, delivers God’s message, warns people of judgment... and then the people usually ignore him and bad things happen.

Haggai is different.

When we open this book, we meet a group of people who came back from exile. These aren't pagans or rebels. These are God's people. They were carried off to Babylon nearly 70 years ago, and now they're home. They've laid the foundation for a rebuilt temple. Everything should be moving forward.

But something has gone wrong. And Haggai is about to expose it.

What makes this moment so important is that Haggai is speaking into a test case. Will this returned generation be different from their ancestors? Will they finally get it right? The whole story of God's people depends on how they respond.

## Part 1: Where Haggai Fits in the Bible

### Haggai in The Twelve

In the ancient Hebrew Bible, the 12 "Minor Prophets" (Hosea through Malachi) were originally arranged as a single scroll called *The Twelve*. Haggai is the tenth book in this

collection.

This matters. When the original readers opened *The Twelve*, they would have read all the earlier prophets first. They would have heard decades of warnings about idolatry and injustice. They would have read about the judgment that fell on Israel. They would have read about exile in Babylon.

By the time they got to Haggai, they already knew the story. Israel broke covenant. God sent judgment. But the prophets also promised something: God would bring back a transformed people to a renewed Jerusalem where His presence would dwell again.

So when Haggai shows up around 520 B.C.E., the reader is thinking: "Is this it? Is this the moment the promises come true?"

## A Specific Historical Moment

To understand Haggai, you need the history.

Around 587 B.C.E., the Babylonian empire destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and carried the people off into exile (2 Kings 24–25). The prophets had warned this was coming. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the other prophets all said the same thing: judgment is certain because you've abandoned the covenant.

But they also said something else. They said God wouldn't abandon His people. A remnant would return. They would rebuild. God's presence would come back.

Nearly 70 years later, Babylon's empire collapsed. The Persians took over, and they had a different policy. They allowed exiled peoples to go home if they wanted to.

So some Israelites made the journey back. Under the leadership of Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel (who came from the line of David), they returned to Jerusalem and began rebuilding the city and their lives.

On paper, this looks like the moment everyone had been waiting for. The remnant is back. A Davidic heir is leading them. The temple project is underway.

But Haggai sees something different.

## Part 2: The People's Drift

### The Slogan

Look at what the people are saying in Haggai 1:2:

#### **Haggai 1:2** *ESV*

<sup>2</sup> “Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time

has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.”

That sounds reasonable. They're not rejecting God. They're just saying it's not the right time yet.

But look at their actions. While they wait for the "right time" to rebuild God's house, they're busy rebuilding their own houses. Haggai 1:4 says:

"Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?" (Haggai 1:4, ESV)

There's an inversion happening. They came back from exile to restore God's presence. Instead, they're settling into comfort. They're building nice homes for themselves while God's house sits abandoned.

## The Symptoms of Spiritual Misalignment

But here's what's interesting. Haggai doesn't just shame them about priorities. He connects their spiritual drift to their actual lives.

"You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes."

(Haggai 1:6, ESV)

They're tired. They're frustrated. No matter how hard they work, they never have enough. Life feels like running on a treadmill that never stops.

Haggai says this isn't random bad luck. It's covenant consequence.

God says:

"You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house." (Haggai 1:9, ESV)

God is saying: your life isn't working because your worship isn't central.

This echoes the pattern from Deuteronomy 28. When Israel kept covenant, they experienced blessing. When they broke it, God sent drought, famine, and frustration. The curse list in Deuteronomy 28 reads like a description of these people's lives.

But this time, they're not breaking covenant with idols. They're breaking it through neglect. They're treating God as something they'll get to eventually.

# Part 3: The Call to Rebuild

## God's Challenge

Then Haggai gives them a direct challenge:

"Consider your ways." (Haggai 1:5, ESV)

That phrase appears twice in this passage. God is asking them to stop and think. Look at your life. Look at your choices. Consider where you've put your energy and resources.

Then He calls them to action:

"Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD." (Haggai 1:8, ESV)

This isn't about a building as an idol. The temple symbolizes God's presence returning to the center of their community. It's the sign that He hasn't abandoned them. It's the proof that they're committed to putting Him first again.

## Part 4: A Mirror for Today

# The Problem Isn't Always Obvious

Here's what makes this so powerful: the people of Haggai's day aren't villains. They're not bowing to Baal. They're not committing gross injustice. They're just... busy. They're practical. They're doing what seems reasonable.

"Let's stabilize our own lives first. Let's build our homes. Let's get secure. Then when things settle down, we'll rebuild the temple."

That's respectable. That's logical. That sounds like wisdom.

But God sees it differently. He sees a people who have made Him a secondary concern. And He sees the fruit of that choice: restlessness, frustration, the constant feeling that something is missing.

## Where We Live the Same Way

Most of us aren't running after other gods. We're running after other good things.

A career that promises security. A home that promises comfort. Activities that promise happiness. Financial goals that promise peace.

None of these are evil. But when they become central and God becomes peripheral, we end up exactly where Haggai's people ended up. We're tired. We're frustrated. We're never quite satisfied, no matter how much we accumulate.

We use spiritual language to justify it too. "When things calm down, I'll get back to prayer." "When the kids are older, I'll serve more." "Once I get this promotion, I'll be more generous." "The time hasn't come yet."

But the time never comes. And our lives feel like bags with holes.

## The Question God Asks You

Haggai's first word to the people is an invitation to honest reflection.

"Consider your ways."

Where does your calendar say God comes second? Where does your budget show that something else is actually first? Where have you used spiritual-sounding reasons to delay costly obedience, and then wondered why life feels thin and frustrating?

This isn't about guilt. It's about waking up.

# Part 5: The Big Idea

Here's what the book of Haggai teaches us:

**Our choices matter. God has chosen to advance His kingdom purposes through the faithfulness and obedience of His people.**

That's a stunning reality. God could do anything. He doesn't need us. But He has made a mysterious choice to work through us, to weave our decisions and obedience into His larger plan.

This means your choice to prioritize prayer matters. Your choice to be generous matters. Your choice to repair a broken relationship matters. Your choice to speak up for justice matters.

God isn't sitting in heaven wondering what you'll do. He's actively waiting to bless you when you turn back to Him.

## Part 6: What Happens Next

Here's where Haggai gets unusual. Unlike most prophetic books, this isn't a story where people ignore the prophet and judgment falls.

In the next section, something surprising happens. The people actually listen.

Within 24 days of hearing Haggai's word, the leadership and all the people respond. They start rebuilding. And when they do, God meets them with a promise.

But before we get there, the invitation stands. Consider your ways. What would change in your life if you made God's purposes central again?