# FIRST THINGS FIRST

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

## When Work Seems Insignificant

November 15, 2026

> 9 *'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty.*
>
> *Haggai 2:9a (read verses 1-9)*

Almost a month after the rebuilding resumed, Haggai delivers a message of encouragement to a discouraged community (520 BC). Some among the people remembered Solomon's magnificent temple and were disappointed by the modest appearance of the structure they were now rebuilding (vv. 1–3; cf. Ezra 3:12–13). God does not dismiss their disappointment; instead, he redirects their attention from what they have lost to what he has promised. Three times he commands them to "be strong," and he calls them to continue working without fear (v. 4). Their confidence, however, is not rooted in their abilities or the temple's appearance, but in God's abiding presence and covenantal faithfulness (vv. 4–5).

The promise that God will shake the heavens and earth and the nations (vv. 6–7) points beyond the immediate rebuilding project to God's future intervention in history. The reference to the nations' treasures coming into the temple anticipates a glory that far exceeds architectural beauty. Indeed, the temple's ultimate significance rests not in its silver or gold, which already belong to God (v. 8), but in his presence. The passage culminates with God's promise of greater glory and peace (v. 9). What appeared insignificant to the people was still central to God's unfolding purposes.

This passage should not be reduced to a lesson about building church facilities or augmenting ministries. Its central concern is God's faithfulness to his covenantal purposes. The people could persevere because God's presence, rather than their circumstances or accomplishments, secured their hope. The use of Haggai 2:6 in Hebrews 12:26–28 further directs readers toward the unshakable kingdom established through Christ—indeed, a greater glory!

# Small Group Guide

November 15, 2026

What did you hear in this morning's message that stood out to you? What was interesting, important, or confusing?

How might the past distract us from what God is doing today?

How does God's presence encourage us?

Where is God calling us to persevere?

### Some Background

By 520 BC, Jewish exiles had returned from Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple destroyed in 586 BC. After an initial effort, construction had stalled for several years because of opposition and discouragement. Following Haggai's challenge, the people had resumed work, but enthusiasm was fading. Some older members remembered Solomon's magnificent temple and were disappointed by the modest appearance of this new structure. Haggai delivers this message during the Feast of Tabernacles, a celebration recalling God's faithfulness to Israel. Into their discouragement, God reminds his people that their hope rests not in the temple's appearance, but in his presence and promises.

### Reflections

Ever walked down nostalgia lane? Remember when things were just better, at least from our perspective? Schools. Family. Church. It is easy to become discouraged when the present doesn't measure up to our remembered past. Like the people in Haggai's day, we can become so focused on what we have lost that we fail to recognize what God is doing among us today. This passage reminds us that faithfulness is not measured by outward appearances, size, or accomplishments, but by God's presence among his people. God calls us to remain strong and continue his work, even when progress seems small or results are difficult to see. Our hope is not rooted in what we can accomplish, but in God's faithfulness and promises. His purposes are greater than our present circumstances, and his kingdom will ultimately prevail.