

# Consider Your Ways

(Haggai)

## Introduction

➤ This year's Summer Sermon Series is on the Minor Prophets, found in the last section of the Old Testament of the Bible (they are referred to as "Minor" prophets simply because they are significantly shorter than "major" prophets). The two-chapter book of Haggai is the second-shortest book, by chapters (2) and verses (38), in the Old Testament (only Obadiah is shorter; one chapter, 21 verses).

Today we come to the tenth of these twelve Minor Prophets – the book of Haggai (p.1005). As is true of most of the authors of the Minor Prophets, we know very little about the prophet Haggai (He is mentioned briefly in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14). His name means "festive" or "festal one" (perhaps indicating that he was born on a feast, or festival, day).

More importantly, we know that Haggai prophesied during "*the second year of Darius the king*" (1:1) which places the date of this book about 520 B.C. (Darius, the king of Persia, reigned c. 521-486 B.C.). Haggai is one of the three last prophets of the Old Testament period, the prophets of the restoration: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. In addition, some scholars believe that Haggai 2:3 reveals that Haggai was alive before Solomon's temple was destroyed, making Haggai at least seventy years old when he wrote this book.

➤ The book of Haggai is unique among the Minor Prophets. Its style is more prose than poetry, and there are no overt oracles of God's wrath or judgement. Haggai prophesied to the people of Jerusalem after they had returned from Babylon in 538 B.C., and before they had rebuilt the temple in 515. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians (king Nebuchadnezzar) in 586 B.C., its walls and temple were in ruins and its people were killed or enslaved.

After 70 years of Babylonian captivity, God's people returned to Jerusalem seeking to restore the city and rebuild the temple. Within the first year of their return, they had laid the foundation for the new temple – but the work stalled, and the people grew discouraged, apathetic, and complacent. Eighteen years after their return, with the temple still uncompleted, God called Haggai to exhort the people to 1) rebuild the temple, and 2) spiritually reprioritize their lives. The temple was completed a few years later (c. 515 B.C.).

This, of course, has immediate and obvious application to us today. If we are not careful, we can become discouraged in our Christian walk or apathetic/complacent concerning the things of God (i.e., God's character, God's Word, God's will, etc.). If we are not vigilant, our Christian faith can turn to reduced heartless religion and mindless rituals. If we are not resolute, we can become more passionate about worldly things than godly things.

## Main theme of Haggai:

Through the prophet Haggai, God called His people to refocus and reprioritize their lives according to His will and His Word. Specifically, God wanted them to restore the temple as a sacred place of worship.

## Key verses in Haggai:

*"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" (1:7-8).*

➤ The book of Haggai is a compilation of four different oracles (days) from the prophet Haggai – each identified by a specific date (1:1; 1:15; 2:1; 2:10 [2:20]). All four of these messages were given in a four-month period, in 520 B.C. (correlating to Aug.-Dec. in our calendar).

**Dates of the oracles in Haggai (all in 520 B.C.)**

Oracle	Reference	Date
First	1:1	1st day of 6th month (Aug. 29)
Second	1:15	24th day of 6th month (Sept. 21)
Third	2:1	21st day of 7th month (Oct. 17)
Fourth	2:10	24th day of 9th month (Dec. 18)
Fifth	2:20	24th day of 9th month (Dec. 18)

➤ For this message, covering the whole book of Haggai, I have chosen to highlight six exhortations that can be derived out of this book. These implicit applications can serve as resolutions for us today, as we learn from God’s Word concerning the complacency, timidity, and lethargy of His people. May we not be like them (see 1Cor.11:28; 2Cor.13:5). But if we are, may we quickly resolve to “consider our ways” and prioritize our lives according to God’s will and His Word.

**Hag 1:5** ~ “Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways.”

Hag 1:5 ~ “Here then is what the LORD who rules over all says: ‘Think carefully about what you are doing.’” (NET)

**Hag 1:7** ~ “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways.”

Hag 1:7 ~ “Moreover, the LORD who rules over all says: ‘Pay close attention to these things also.’” (NET)

**Hag 2:15** ~ “Now then, consider from this day onward. ...”

Hag 2:15 ~ “Now therefore reflect carefully on the recent past ...” (NET)

**Hag 2:18-19** ~ “Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid, consider: <sup>19</sup>Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you.”

Hag 2:18 ~ “Think carefully about the past: from today, the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, to the day work on the temple of the LORD was resumed, think about it.” (NET)

The Hebrew word translated “*consider*” (*sûwm lêbâb*) in each of these instances can literally refer to “setting one’s heart” for a specific purpose or perspective (to think carefully about what you are doing, or about to do). The ‘heart’ here is much more than just one’s feelings, but a Hebrew expression for the innermost part of a person – referring to thoughts (the mind), feelings (the emotions), and behavior (the will) [see “heart” in Deut.6:5-6; Ps.139:23; Is.6:10; Jer.17:9; 29:13].

➤ I want to highlight six resolutions we ought to make as applications from our study of the book of Haggai.

### 1. Resolve to worship God and God alone.

➤ It is important to remember that at this time the city of, and temple in, Jerusalem destroyed by the Babylonians. While God’s people were excited to be freed from Babylonian captivity, and overjoyed to be back “home” in Jerusalem, they were nonetheless cautious, battered, and weary. To make matters worse, there were real and immediate threats from their enemies. Rather quickly, their excitement gave way to anxiety and their zeal gave way to complacency. The work of rebuilding stalled, and eventually was abandoned altogether.

As it was, in effect, the people had no place to gather to worship God. The temple represented the divine presence of God; God's dwelling place. Their failure to rebuild the temple was an indication of their failure to prioritize the worship of God [the same can be said of many professing Christians today who fail to prioritize the corporate worship of God in church; see Heb.10:24-25]. When God is not your true passion, it is easy to set Him aside when life gets "busy" or when difficulties arise.

✓ **Illust:** "The physical restoration of the city was a crucial component in the development of God's unfailing purpose of redemption in preparing the way for the coming Christ. According to prophecy, there had to be a Jerusalem and temple in place when the Messiah came (Mal 3:1). Therefore, the first order of business for Zerubbabel and the hopeful remnant was to rebuild the fallen temple" (Haggai: A

Commentary by Michael P.V. Barrett; [Introduction]).

➤ God was neither pleased with, nor tolerant of, the spiritual complacency of His people. Through the prophet Haggai, God rebuked His people for spiritual laziness, their misplaced spiritual priorities, and their ungodly spiritual perspective. They were no longer God-centered, but had become self-centered; no longer passionate about worshiping God, but had become passionate about other things and indifferent to the worship of God; no longer preoccupied with godly things, but preoccupied with worldly things; no longer devoted to obeying God's Word, but devoted to doing whatever was right in their own eyes. They convinced themselves that the LORD's work could wait, and they rationalized that their wants were more important than God's commands. God was displaced as the number one priority in their lives.

If we are not consciously vigilant, we can be guilty of the very things that plagued Israel in Haggai's day. And, consequently, we can be under the just discipline of God (1Cor.11:29-30; Heb.12:5-11).

➤ In light of their spiritual indifference and indolence, God unleashed this scathing rebuke:

**Hag 1:2-4** ~ "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?"

➤ God highlighted for them how futile their lives had become – how futile it is to live for temporal and material things.

**Hag 1:5-7** ~ "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.'"

➤ No matter how much they worked, they still needed more. No matter how much they earned, they still wanted more. The self-centered, self-serving, life is insatiably futile. In His rebuke, the LORD exhorted Israel to truly think about their lives – their priorities and passions – and to consider the consequence of their actions.

In fact, as the LORD made clear, such futility and frustration was on account of the LORD's discipline as a consequence for their failing to prioritize and obey God.

**Hag 1:9-11** ~ "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.'"

➤ Failing to love God more than anything or anyone is the greatest sin – it's breaking the greatest commandment.

**Deut 6:5-6** ~ “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup>And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.”

**Matt 22:35-38** ~ “And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup>“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” <sup>37</sup>And he said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the great and first commandment.”

**1 John 2:15-17** ~ “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. <sup>17</sup>And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

➤ Failing to put God first – to love Him supremely and worship Him exclusively – is tantamount to idolatry. It is not enough to merely claim to believe in God, or to profess to be a Christian. Having God as “a part” of your life, or identifying as “godly” whenever it is beneficial, convenient, or comfortable, is not true worship. Using God whenever you are in trouble or afraid is not truly loving God. Putting God aside, or setting things as equal to Him – whether that be material possessions, fleshly desires, relationships, popularity/social acceptance, or comfort/pleasure – is the expression of false worship.

**Hag 1:8** ~ “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.”

**1 Cor 10:31** ~ “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

➤ May we not fail, as Israel did, to consistently put God first in our lives. May we not fail to have God as our greatest affection, and the glory of God as our greatest ambition. May we not fail to truly worship God, and God alone.

## 2. Resolve to obey Scripture as God’s absolute and perfect Word.

➤ Throughout the Bible, we find clear and direct commands of God. These are not suggestions. We do not get to peruse Scripture picking what commands we will obey and what commands we will ignore (i.e., disobey). Throughout the Bible – which Christ and His apostles repeatedly affirmed as Scripture (e.g., Lk.24:25-27, 44-47; Jn.10:35; Rom.4:3; Acts 1:16; 17:13; Heb.13:7; 1Pet.2:6) – we find declarations concerning its inspiration and inerrancy as the Word of God.

**2 Tim 3:16-17** ~ “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

**2 Peter 1:20-21** ~ “knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

**John 17:17** ~ “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”

➤ Throughout the book of Haggai (which is only 38 verses), we are repeatedly confronted with the following expressions: “*declares the LORD*” (12 times), “*says the LORD*” (8 times), “*the word of the LORD*” (5 times), and “*the voice of the LORD*” (1 time). Haggai’s job was to clearly and to correctly say what the LORD had told him to say – not to add to it or take away from it. He was merely the spokesman for God: “*the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD’s message*” (1:13). He was not to share his opinions, his thoughts, his pet-peeves, his political/religious ideologies. He was not to change God’s Word to fit the culture or tailor it to be more palatable for his audience. The same is true for every preacher or teacher of the Word of God. We are to declare “thus sayeth the LORD” and be sure that what we declare as God’s Word is indeed the Word of God.

**1 Thess 2:13** ~ “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.”

**Heb 4:12** ~ “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

➤ When God speaks, He speaks with divine authority and veracity. As perfectly holy and absolutely omniscient, God is never wrong; never mistaken; never guessing; never fickle; never deceptive; and He never lies.

As Christians, we must have supreme reverence for the Word of God. Which means that we are devoted to reading it, studying it, and obeying it. Too many professing Christians have a “cafeteria” mindset concerning the Bible – they take what they want, what they like, and leave what they do not. Since all of the Bible is God’s (inerrant/inspired) Word, we must not pick-and-choose what we will obey or what we will believe.

➤ Upon hearing God’s rebuke, through the prophet Haggai, *“the remnant”* (1:12) of God’s people *“obeyed the voice of the LORD their God”* (1:12):

**Hag 1:12-15** ~ “Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD. <sup>13</sup>Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD’s message, ‘I am with you, declares the LORD.’ <sup>14</sup>And the LORD 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 the LORD of hosts, their God, <sup>15</sup>on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.”

➤ Thankfully, the people of Israel were awakened from their stupor and (unlike their forefathers) they obeyed the Word of the LORD. One reason for this is that they truly *“feared the LORD”* (1:12). Scripture tells us that the fear of the LORD is *“the beginning of wisdom”* (Ps.111:10) and *“the beginning of knowledge”* (Prov.1:7), and the lack of fearing the LORD as foolishness and unbelief which results in condemnation (see Lk.12:5; Rom.3:18).

To fear God is to be in awe of Him as the one true (Creator and Sovereign) God. It is to view God with supreme reverence, and to respond to Him with unmitigated obedience. The one who does not fear the LORD will not obey the LORD, and will reap the consequences of their sin. However, the one who truly fears the LORD will submit to the LORD and seek to obey all His commands (Jn.14:15; Lk.6:46). Notice that the people *“came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God”* (1:15). Their fear of the LORD caused them to respond in obedience to the word of the LORD.

### 3. Resolve to confess and repent of sin quickly and completely.

➤ No one (other than Christ) can live a perfect (sinless) life. Therefore, when we sin we must sincerely confess and repent of our sin. Through the prophet Haggai, God exposed Israel’s sin and their need for true repentance.

**Hag 2:10-14** ~ “On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, <sup>11</sup>‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: Ask the priests about the law: <sup>12</sup>‘If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?’ The priests answered and said, ‘No.’ <sup>13</sup>Then Haggai said, ‘If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?’ The priests answered and said, ‘It does become unclean.’ <sup>14</sup>Then Haggai answered

and said, ‘So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, declares the LORD, and so with every work of their hands. And what they offer there is unclean.’”

- The people of God were defiled by sin, and that sin plagued the people of God. No amount of good works (e.g., sacrifices, offerings) can atone for sin. All sins against God must be forgiven by God. All unforgiven sin is deserving of God’s just wrath and condemnation (Jn.3:18, 36).

When Israel was disobedient to God, when they failed to properly prioritize God in their lives, the consequence was God’s chastisement. God will not prosper nor bless those who are disobedient to Him. But God will bless those who sincerely confess and repent of their sins to God. As we saw in Haggai 1:6-11, so we see again in 2:15-19.

**Hag 2:15-19** ~ “Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the LORD, <sup>16</sup>how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. <sup>17</sup>I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the LORD. <sup>18</sup>Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid, consider: <sup>19</sup>Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you.”

- Thankfully – through His love, mercy, and grace – God has made away for us to be completely and eternally forgiven by Him. He sent His one and only Son, incarnate as Jesus Christ, to be our Savior. Jesus lived a perfectly sinless life, and died on the cross for our sins, in order that we could be forgiven by God and eternally saved.

**Rom 5:8-9** ~ “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.”

**Rom 6:23** ~ “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our LORD.”

**Eph 2:8-9** ~ “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

**2 Cor 5:21** ~ “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

- We all have sinned against God more times and in more ways than we can ever recall (Rom.3:10-12, 23). And yet, through the sinless life and substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, all those who receive Jesus as LORD and Savior are forgiven of each and every sin (past, present, future). Repeatedly in God’s Word, we are told that *“the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1Jn.1:7), and that *“If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1Jn.1:9).

#### 4. Resolve to trust God as the sovereign LORD, and His promises as unailing.

- When reading the book of Haggai, there is one expression that is almost impossible to miss. The phrase *“the LORD of hosts”* appears 14 times in the book of Haggai. It combines two important titles/names for God.

The first is *“the LORD”* (*Y<sup>e</sup>hōvâh*; Yahweh or Jehovah; indicated by small/all caps). Every single reference to *“the LORD”* in the book of Haggai (35 occurrences) is the Hebrew word Yahweh. This is the proper name of the one true God; the name God gave Himself. It refers to God as the self-existing, eternal God; as the one true God who is sovereign over everything.

**Exodus 3:14-15** ~ “God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am [*hayah ... hayah*].’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I am [*hayah*] has sent me to you.’” <sup>15</sup>God also said to Moses, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, **The LORD** [*Yahweh/Jehovah*], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

The two-word phrase “I am” translates the one Hebrew word (*hayah*) which means “to be.” It is from this Hebrew word that the divine name of God as Yahweh (Jehovah) is derived. When used of God, this word refers to God as the “I am” – the self-existing, eternal God (i.e., always and forever the “I am”, never “I was” or “I will be”). The phrase “I Am” is in reference to God’s self-existent eternally. That is, God has always been and will forever be. He is never the “I was” or even the “I will be.” This is who we are called to worship – the only true self-existing, eternal God.

- The second part of “*the LORD of hosts*”, of course, is “*hosts*” (*tsâbâ’* or *sabaoth*). In this context, the word refers to the commander of an army – the one who leads an army into battle. The “Commander-in-Chief” is none other the Yahweh Himself. God is the One who leads the armies of heaven (Ps.103:21; 148:2; Isa.40:26; 45:12), and the armies of earth (1Sam.17:45; Ps. 68:11-12), and no one and nothing will be victorious against His army.

Divine sovereignty is the “invincible reign” of God – His supreme power and ultimate authority over all things.

Divine providence is the “invisible hand” of God – His sovereign act to oversee, sustain, control, direct and rule all things according to the counsel of His will and for the purpose of His glory.

- What God wills and what God promises will come to pass – He has the right (authority) and might (power) to accomplish it – for He is “*the LORD of hosts*”! (see Is.6:3, 5; Rom.9:29; Jms.5:4).
  - ✓ Illust: “His sovereign rule over all creation and creatures guarantees the prophecy’s fulfillment. The focus is not so much on the events of the prediction as on the one who promised them, for the prediction is only as good as his word. The believer’s hope is in him, not in some notion that the prophetic word magically bends history to the divine plan” (Bruce K. Waltke, “*Micah*,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* [Mic.4:4]).

**Hag 2:6-9** ~ “For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. <sup>7</sup>And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>8</sup>The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. <sup>9</sup>The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.”

**Heb 12:25-29** ~ “See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. <sup>26</sup>At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, ‘**Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens**’ [Hag.2:6]. <sup>27</sup>This phrase, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of things that are shaken – that is, things that have been made – in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. <sup>28</sup>Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, <sup>29</sup>for our God is a consuming fire.”

- God can effortlessly “*shake*” (2:6, 7, 21) all creation – “*the heavens ... the earth ... the nations*” – according to His sovereign plan and pleasure. He does not need permission from His creation, He does not need creation to help Him, nor does He need us to finance His war efforts (2:8). God can interfere with, or intervene in, His creation whenever He wants and however He wants. His power cannot be slowed, altered, or defeated by anything or anyone.

**Hag 2:21-22** ~ “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, <sup>22</sup>and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother.”

**Ps 115:3** ~ “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.” (Is.46:8-11; Acts 17:24-25; Eph.1:11)

## 5. Resolve to serve the LORD faithfully and earnestly.

➤ These truths ought to lead us in faithful and earnest service to the LORD. For we know that “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” (Rom.8:31), and that “[God]who is in you is greater than he that is in the world” (1Jn.4:4).

**Hag 2:1-3** ~ “In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, <sup>2</sup>“Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, <sup>3</sup>“Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?””

**Hag 1:8** ~ “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.”

➤ The temptation for the Israelites was to compare the temple they were building to that of the “*glory*” of Solomon’s temple; and, in comparison, it seemed significantly inferior (because, humanly speaking, it was). Their eyes were fixated on earthly things, and not heavenly things (see Col.3:1-2).  
✓ **Illust:** “Undisputedly, what they were doing would not come close to matching the grandeur of what Solomon had constructed. When they put themselves first, the work suffered; when they put themselves down, the work seemed pointless. Comparing self with others is never wise (2Cor 10:12). The value of service is not to be determined by comparison with others but by conformity to God’s will. God’s will for them was to build this second temple; that needed to be the point of focus rather than what used to be” (Haggai: A Commentary by Michael P.V. Barrett; [2:1-3]).

**Hag 2:4-5** ~ “Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, <sup>5</sup>according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.”

➤ Notice the three commands the LORD gave to the Israelites 1] “*Be strong*” (2:4<sup>2x</sup>), 2] “*Work*” (2:4), 3] “*Fear not*” (2:5). Christianity is not a spectator’s sport, and it is not for cowards. We are called to be soldiers in the LORD’s army; workers in His field; servants of Him who is our Master. We must not be indifferent to the things of God, or apathetic to His will and Word. We must seek to serve Him faithfully and earnestly (see Deut.31:6-7; Josh.1:6-9; cf. Phil.2:12-13).

➤ We should not be discouraged or feel defeated, and we should not languish in despair or fear – no matter how bleak or evil the world is or appears to be. We must remember that God is “*the LORD of hosts*” and that He will never fail, forget, or forsake those who belong to Him.

**Ps 46:1-3** ~ “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup>Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, <sup>3</sup>though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.”

**Ps 46:6-7** ~ “The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. <sup>7</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”



## 6. Resolve to seek God in and through His Son, Jesus Christ.

➤ We must not miss this last truth, or neglect this last exhortation. As we have seen throughout this series on the minor prophets, and as we see all throughout God’s Word, all Scripture culminates on the person and work of Jesus Christ – the one and only Son of God and the one and only Savior from God. We see this hinted at in the second chapter of Haggai:

**Hag 2:9** ~ “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.”

➤ The promise of God, through Haggai, goes way beyond the physical structure of the second temple. Ultimately, the book of Haggai foreshadows the coming of the Messiah – the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. He is the perfect and eternal fulfillment of God’s glory. It is only through Christ that we can be saved, and it is only through Christ that we can truly know God, dwell with God, and belong to God (Jn.14:6; Acts 4:12). He is the greatest glory of the LORD’s temple (Jn.2:19).

**John 1:1-5, 14** ~ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ... <sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

**Rev 21:22** ~ “And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.”

➤ This is further established in the book of Haggai, in God’s promise to Zerubbabel:

**Hag 2:23** ~ “On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts.”

➤ Zerubbabel, who served as governor of Judah after the exile (1:1; 2:3, 21), was a descendent of king David, through whom God promised to bring forth the Messiah (2Sam.7:12-13; Ps.2:6). Even through the exile, God’s covenant with David was neither broken nor forgotten. Zerubbabel reestablished the Davidic line, by God’s sovereign election (“*for I have chosen you*”; 2:23; see Jer.22:24-27), which would culminate in the millennial/eternal reign of Christ [Zerubbabel appears in the line of Christ on both Joseph’s side (Matt.1:12) and Mary’s side (Lk.3:27)].

In fact, to symbolize this messianic line, God promised to make Zerubbabel “*a signet ring*” (2:23) which represented the honor and authority and power of a king (cf. Jer.22:24-27).

## Conclusion

➤ Zerubbabel represented the promise of the coming Messiah – Jesus Christ – who is “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” (Rev.19:11-16). He is the greater glory of whom Haggai prophesied (2:9).

✓ **Illust:** “There could be no better way for Haggai to end his series of sermons than with the assurance that Christ was coming. Over 500 years remained before he would come, but he was coming, and the best was yet to be” (Haggai: A Commentary by Michael P.V. Barrett; [2:23]).

➤ With the same certainty – based on the sovereign authority of the LORD, and the unfailing truth of His promises – Jesus Christ will come again (see Rev.22:7, 12, 20). Indeed, the best is yet to be!

May we not be distracted or disheartened from doing the will of the LORD. May we not be divided in our worship of the LORD. May we not be disobedient to the Word of the LORD. May we be resolute in our Christian walk. May we “consider our ways.”