

Proclaiming Restoration: Haggai

Part 3

By [Sean Morris](#)

As you know, we are currently studying the book of Zechariah during our Lord's Day Evening Worship Services. In conjunction with this ongoing series, we will post a number of short blog entries regarding the Post-Exilic Prophets (Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi, Joel). We continue today with Haggai.

Haggai

The thrust of Haggai is essentially this: The restoration of the Lord's house by the people of God will mediate God's presence. After the Exile, the Lord is renewing his promises to his people and calls on them to finish rebuilding the temple so that he might be with them and fulfill his promises to bless the whole world through them (2:9), particularly through the Messiah from the house of David (2:23).

The author of this book is the prophet Haggai, whose name means "festal." Scholars suggest that he may have been born during a festival of Israel, or that perhaps his name is significantly linked to the overall message of the prophetic book which he is writing: the restoration of Israel's great feasts within a restored temple. Widespread scholarly consensus is that the Word of the Lord comes to Haggai between late August and mid-December of 520 BC.

Remember that the historically-defining moments for Israel are situated around the two big "E's": Exodus and Exile. Haggai takes place after God's people have been released from Exile in Babylon in 538 BC. The specific mention of the "second year of Darius" (Hag. 1:1) places the book firmly in the year 520 BC (Darius I ruled over the Persian Empire from 522–486 BC). The people of Israel have returned and resettled their homeland, Judah, but they have stalled their efforts in rebuilding the Temple of God (something which they would not do until 515 BC, some 23 years after returning home!).

If you read through this Old Testament book, you'll notice a number of similarities and a fair bit of overlap between Haggai and Zechariah. Haggai motivates the leaders (Zerubbabel and Joshua) and the people of God to consider their economic and spiritual circumstances and to renew their efforts to complete the

work of temple restoration. Haggai, along with Zechariah, called upon the people to stop focusing on their own economic well-being and to complete the temple.

As you go through Haggai, you'll notice that there are a number of key themes that arise over and over again:

1. The restoration of God's house. A decaying temple signifies a decaying relationship between the Lord and his people. Temple restoration highlights God's desire to renew a covenant relationship with his people, a relationship that is characterized via his presence dwelling among them within the Temple.

2. The prophetic word is the divine Word. The divine message is characterized by "thus says the Lord" (1:2, 5, 7; 2:6, 11), "declares the Lord" (1:9, 13; 2:4, 8, 9, 14, 17, 23), as the "voice of the Lord their God" (1:12), and is the "Lord's message" (1:13). The words of Haggai convey a serious message and come from Authority of which there is no greater. God's people would do well to heed Haggai's words.

3. The Lord is sovereign. The phrase "Lord of hosts" occurs 14 times: He is the One who gives the divine word, controls the fortunes of all nations, directs nature, motivates his people to action, and establishes and deposes kingdoms.

4. The people must work. A restored house will bring glory to the Lord (and convey blessing to the people, but there is work to be done. Physical labor (1:14) is urged, but there is also "heart" work to be done: serious self-examination and repentance, work of the soul (1:5-7; 2:15-19).

5. The restoration of David's house. The Lord, who had taken off the "ring" of David's house (Jer. 22:24-27), now promises to wear it once again: God will renew his covenant with his chosen people. The union of Israel's King and Israel's Temple is a major theme that we find both in the Old Testament (2 Samuel 7; Ps. 2:6), as well as the New Testament (Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:18-22). We see how this prophecy is ultimately fulfilled as the temple is rebuilt in Christ Jesus, the Davidic heir, and as he is installed as the True messianic King of David's line (Rom. 1:1-4). The promises to David are fulfilled in a sense during Haggai's time, but only through Christ do we find the truest fulfillment of the promises to Zerubbabel (Matt. 1:1, 12-13; Luke 3:27).

Be on the lookout for these themes as you read Haggai and all the Post-Exilic prophets, along with Zechariah, over the coming weeks.

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