

Pillar Passage – Hag 1
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Today we are looking at the first book of Haggai in the Old Testament. This prophecy came to Haggai, the prophet, in 520 BC, which was about 20 years after the first Jews returned to Palestine from their exile in Babylon. The message of this book is addressed to Zerubbabel and to Joshua. So just a little background on these two.

Zerubbabel is the grandson of King Jeconiah, who was exiled in 597 BC, and referred to here as son of Shealtiel—Zerubbabel is. What do we make of this? Two things: Being his grandson, makes Zerubbabel someone who is in line for the throne of King David since King Jeconiah was a king of Judah. Zerubbabel was actually thought the son of King Jeconiah's third son, so it's possible that Shealtiel, the first son, did not have any sons, or any living sons, and he adopted Zerubbabel and then took his name. It's very possible that that's what's happening here. That was not unheard of in ancient times. The Babylonian administrative state was center in Sumeria, so Zerubbabel has been named the governor of Judah, which really just makes him a regional functionary. It's not a big title under these circumstances.

Then Joshua is the son of Jehozadak the priest, therefore, he is in charge of religious matters in the life of Judah at this time. So, Zerubbabel is political leader and Jehozadak is the religious leader of the people and God then has a message. That message first comes in verse 1-11 and it basically has to do with the people's priorities.

God has given them plenty of time to rebuild their own homes. But in doing so, they have said to themselves and each other, "The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord." So, the word come from God through Haggai to say, "Is it time for you to live in *paneled* houses"—which would have been a luxury then—"while this house lies in ruins—the house of God, the temple?"

The problem here; God has given them plenty of time to rebuild their own home. Their own homes is not the problem. God is not anti-home. He is not even anti-paneled homes. The problem here is in the comparative of the priorities that are operating here. The people have prioritized their own homes and their own comfort over the house of God which is really a picture of the worship of the house of God.

So, the Lord says, "Consider your ways." This a way of saying, "Just look around at your realities. Right now you sow much, after having returned from exile, that you are harvesting little. You eat, yet somehow you never have enough. Do you notice this? Do you notice that as hard as you work at clothing yourself—at making yourself comfortable—no one is comfortable? No one is warm. Do you see how your whole life is like someone who earns wages and puts the money in a bag with holes? Have you ever asked yourselves in all this time, why? Why is this happening to us? Why is it that the harder we work, the more we stay in the same place?"

God says, this is why. “Consider your ways. Go up into the hills and bring wood and build the house”—the house of God—“that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified.”

This has always been the purpose of the people of God, throughout all of history, to bring glory to God among the nations. They are not doing that. They are bringing themselves glory, by the glory that they are bestowing on their own houses.

Verse 9. “You looked for much, and behold, it has come to little.” Have you asked yourselves, why it is that has happened? Why it is that when you bring something home it gets blown away. It is Me that did that. I did it. I did that because my house lies in ruins—in this moment, literally in ruins—while each of you busies himself with his own house. “Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have even call for a future 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.” You fix this. Fix this and then we’ll see what’s what about everything else that you pray for.

This is—by the way—very similar to the logic in 1 Peter 3:7 (I’m not going to pull it up here) but especially you men, take a look at that and notice there that Peter uses the same logic there that men are to live in an understanding way with their wives. God—for a very specific reason which I’ll talk about in another time—finds that to be so important that until they get that right, all their other prayer requests—basically—are going to go into God’s heavenly inbox. He’s going to wait on those, until they gets that right.

Back to the passage. How did the people respond? The people respond by obeying the voice of God. They act. They act in such a way that in their hearts, they fear the Lord—which really is the other side of the word faith. Fear and faith are really two sides of the same thing. They put their faith in the Lord, and they fear Him with an awe and a respect—a humble fear and respect—that is due God. Then they obey His voice. His voice given through Haggai, and then Zerubbabel and Joshua.

Then, once they so this—this is sweet words from the Lord—He replies through Haggai, “I am with you,” declared the Lord. Simply, I am with you. This is *the* place of blessing, that the Lord would be with you. We think it is in all other kinds of places. We think that it is in another trip to Home Depot. We think it is working on Sundays right through the Sabbath. We think it is in a new car. We think it is in all kinds of other places. But *the* blessing is in the presence of God. God with us—Christmas season. This reminds us of the word, Emmanuel—God with us. That is the place of blessing.

The Lord stirs up the spirit of Zerubbabel, and the spirit of Joshua, and the spirit of all of the people. The initiator of all of this is God. This is where all great revivals start, for God.

They came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts and then they finished it. This is a sweet thing. It is something that we ought to consider our day. What are the priorities that we live for?

Might there be some element of the frustrations and futility of the United States that are the result—not of, say, perverted leftist—but because of the misplaced priorities of *Christians*?

Sometimes, many times, all the time, when God is doing 3 things, He is doing 3,000 things. Might one thing be, in our day and age, that Christians are living with the wrong priorities and God is bringing futility to our country, to our culture, to our way of life because of that? Because we have placed the worship of God out of the center of our lives. We have deprioritized the worship of Him and some many of our struggles, of our trials, of our lack comes downstream from that misplaced priority.

The beginning of every great revival begins with this very thing; the reprioritizing of worship—of the worship of God. In every square inch. On Sunday and in every square inch of life. May He do that again. May He do that in us. May He revive us by His Spirit through His Word.