

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JULY 5 - 9, 2021



COURSE SERMON SERIES
5/9 - 8/1
CORRECTIONS

THE MINOR PROPHETS

MONDAY

Haggai 1-2

In 538 BC, about fifty thousand Jews left Babylon and returned to their homeland to rebuild the temple and restore the nation. In 536 BC, they laid the foundation of the temple; the work was stopped by their enemies and was not resumed until 520 BC under the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 1-6).

Haggai's message to the Jewish people came eighteen years after their return. Haggai 2:3 seems to indicate that the prophet had seen Jerusalem before the destruction of the temple and exile in 586 BC, meaning he was more than seventy years old by the time he delivered his prophecies. I see this aged godly servant looking back on the glories of his nation, a prophet imbued with a passionate desire to see his people rise from the ashes of exile and reclaim their rightful place as God's light to the nations.

The book is comprised of four messages that Haggai gave during a four-month period. His purpose was to get workers back on track and to keep them working until the temple was completed. His first message called the people to consider their ways (1:1-15) and put God's house ahead of their own houses. Then he appealed to them to be strong (2:1-9) in the face of shattered expectations, be clean (2:10-19), and be encouraged (2:20-23).

When God's work is being neglected, the preaching of the Word of God gets things going again! G. Campbell Morgan said, "Whereas the house of God today is no longer material but spiritual, the material is still a very real symbol of the spiritual. When the Church in any place in any locality is careless about the material place of assembly, the place of worship and its work, it is a sign and evidence that its life is at a low ebb."

The church today is at an important crossroads as the pandemic is ending and we are moving back to corporate worship and service on the physical property. The book of Hebrews says, *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near"* (Hebrews 10:24-25).

QUESTIONS

What is God calling you to do at Glenkirk as the open campus prepares for the summer events?

PRAYERS FOR AFRICAN ENTERPRISE

African Enterprise (AE) seeks to evangelize the cities of Africa through evangelism, discipleship, leadership enhancement, youth empowerment, community transformation, and peace building. Please pray for the cities of North Africa where AE will be carrying out evangelistic missions in 2021.

TUESDAY

Haggai 1:1-11; Matthew 6:33

The foundations of the temple laid in 536 BC had lain untouched for sixteen years. The people, discouraged by the “people of the land,” had decided it was not worth the effort to rebuild the temple. God then raised up Haggai and Zechariah to challenge the people to resume the building process (Ezra 4:24-5:2). Since the people decided that the time must not be right to build the temple, God asks them through Haggai whether it is right for them to be living in their own paneled homes (extraordinary) while the temple lies desolate. The people have suffered poor harvests and an overall poor economic state because of their refusal to build the temple. This situation can only be rectified by restarting the process of temple construction interrupted so long ago.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and these things [food, clothing, shelter] shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33).

Haggai’s congregation had never heard that great promise, but the principle behind Jesus’ words was written into their Law: *“Honor the Lord with our possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine”* (Proverbs 3:9-10; cf. Leviticus 26:3-13; Deuteronomy 16:17; 28:1-14; 30:3-9). It is obvious that the nation had its priorities confused. But are God’s people today any different?

Haggai called the people to examine their lifestyle and actions considering the covenant God made with them before the nation entered the land of Canaan (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28). We are called to give careful thought to putting God first in our time, talents, and spending. When we put God first and give Him what is rightfully His, we open the door to spiritual enrichment and the kind of stewardship that honors the Lord.

When it comes to spending and making time for God, it is not about having enough time to fit God in, it is about putting God first and making a priority in your schedule.

QUESTIONS

What is your excuse for not putting God first?

PRAYERS FOR AFRICAN ENTERPRISE

Pray for African Enterprise's mission to Tanzania in August. Tanzania holds one of the largest cities in Africa and continues to grow. Pray that the gospel can be shared with those living in Dar es Salaam (former capital and major economic hub). Pray that the gospel will be boldly preached and well received.

WEDNESDAY

Haggai 1:12-15

Jesus replied, *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*
(Matthew 22:37-40)

When God speaks to us through His Word, there is only one response, and that is obedience. We don't have the option of weighing the options, examining alternatives, or negotiating the terms.

Haggai challenged the people to get back to the work God had called them to do to build the temple honoring God. The leaders and all the people united in obeying God's instructions, and they were motivated by a reverent fear of the LORD (v. 12). Haggai had used the title *“Lord Almighty”* ten times in his four prophecies (vv. 2, 9, 14; 2:4, 7, 8, 9, 23) describing the God who is in supreme command of the armies of heaven (stars and angels) and of earth. The obedience of the leaders and people was the result of God working in their hearts, just as He had worked in the heart of King Cyrus and the hearts of the exiles who chose to return to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel (Ezra 1:5). *“For it is God who works in you both to will and to act in or to fulfill His good purpose”* (Philippians 2:13).

Haggai delivered his first message on August 29, 520 BC, but it was not until September 21 that the people resumed their work on the temple. Why the three-week delay? Before they could build, they needed to remove accumulated debris, take inventory of their supplies, and organize work crews. It is also possible they took the time to confess their sins and purify themselves so their work would be pleasing to the LORD (Psalm 51:16-19).

We can learn from the Jewish remnant of Haggai's day. Despite excuses and wrong priorities, God is at work in our hearts, turning us back to Him to love Him and others. If the Lord Almighty is to be pleased with us and gloried before the unbelieving world, we must hear God's Word, believe it, and act upon it, no matter what the circumstances may be.

QUESTIONS

What importance do you place on obeying God's commands?

PRAYERS FOR AFRICAN ENTERPRISE

Pray for African Enterprise's leadership training programs. Pray that all those preparing for the mission will preach Christ crucified. Pray that we can train Christians for ministry in a way that will equip them for a lifetime of faithful service.

THURSDAY

Haggai 2:1-9

Perseverance seems like an archaic concept in our day of instant everything. If it doesn't come easy, why pursue it? If it's hard or requires endurance, maybe it's not "your thing." It's easy to start a new diet, exercise program, or get married. It's tough to keep on when problems arise or when results don't match your expectations.

The people of Haggai's day were facing discouragement just three weeks after committing to obey God's call and get back to rebuilding the temple. We can hear God's encouragement today calling us to persevere, be strong, fear not, knowing the Lord is present with us in every circumstance (v. 4).

Haggai's second message preaches that God understands and cares about the discouragement His people faced in serving Him (vv. 1-3). God Almighty does not gloss over or ignore the reality of the situation. If we do not keep in mind that in all our troubling circumstances the Lord understands and cares for us, we will easily become discouraged and often quit. What discouraged God's people in Haggai's day is the same today. We can become discouraged when we suffer the loss of the initial excitement of a new ministry or project, face a delay, struggle with comparisons, competitiveness, inside pessimism and flawed expectations. A wrong view of success can especially dampen our spiritual endeavors. Who does not want "success" by what we see (*external*) in our work *now* (*instantly*)? But God's view of success is in our transformed hearts (*spiritual, internal*) and future (*eternal*).

Prophecies in Scripture are given to strengthen and encourage our faith rather than speculate about the future. Haggai's prophecies (vv. 6-9) shift our focus from the local temple being rebuilt in Jerusalem to the worldwide reign of the Messiah on earth. God owns it all and what He wants are willing hearts and open hands. Just as His people, building the temple in Haggai's day would bring more glory to God, so our obedience in building His spiritual temple, the church, will glorify Him.

Finally, the Lord promises that in this place He will give peace (v. 9). We all look forward to the true and lasting peace for this world and for Jerusalem when Jesus returns (Revelation 21:4).

QUESTIONS

What discourages you the most in your service for the Lord? How can you prevent it or overcome it? What do you consider the definition of "success" in Christian service?

PRAYERS FOR AFRICAN ENTERPRISE

Pray for African Enterprise staff who face ongoing challenges linked to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Pray that the joy of the Lord would strengthen them. Pray that leadership would find creative ways to spread the gospel, train others, and raise support during this season.

FRIDAY

Haggai 2:10-23; John 15:15-15

The third and fourth divine messages were given to Haggai on the same day. The first message addressed all the people's sin. God couldn't bless the people the way He wanted to because they were defiled, so it was important that they keep themselves clean before the Lord. "Clean" and "unclean" were very important concepts to the Jews living under the Old Covenant (Leviticus). Haggai reminds the people working on the temple that they couldn't impart holiness to it (vv. 10-12), but they could defile it by their sins (v. 13). Not only was it important to do God's work, but it was important they do His work from hearts that were pure and devoted to God. The Lord wants us to examine our circumstances, consider our ways, and turn back, if needed, to God to receive His assured blessing (vv. 18-19).

The second message was addressed to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah. He was the grandson of Jehoiachin, the last ruler of Judah before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and conquered the land. Most of the population had been carried off to Babylon, and even now, only a small remnant of about 50,000 had returned under Cyrus' permission. The Jews were still under Persian rule and surrounded by hostile neighbors who opposed the Jewish resettlement. The Jews who returned seemed more concerned with their own comfort and prosperity than with the things of God. Although there was a good response to Haggai's call to rebuild the

temple, many Jews were religious outwardly, but their hearts were not right before God (v. 14). The wall of Jerusalem remained broken down, the city vulnerable to attack. Zerubbabel needed encouragement to lead.

God makes it clear that history is firmly in His sovereign control and His plan will prevail. Using repetitively, the personal pronoun “I,” God states His divine plan. God’s message to Zerubbabel was that even though the most powerful kingdoms on earth would shake and fall, he need not fear because he is God’s chosen one, as precious in God’s sight as a signet ring was to a king. God’s message to His church and to individual believers in these frightening times—when world and personal events cause us to quake with fear—is: *“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom”* (Luke 12:32).

QUESTIONS

What is your response to God’s call for His people’s holiness in His work? What encouragement do you receive knowing you are chosen by God?

PRAYERS FOR AFRICAN ENTERPRISE

Pray for all the churches that African Enterprise has planted. Pray that they would be wise in how to reach their community with the gospel, as well as minister the love of Jesus to those in need. Pray that they would be able to raise up additional leadership within their churches.

Sources

- G. Campbell Morgan's quote can be found in his article, "Be Strong—and Work," <http://articles.ochristian.com/article14080.shtml>

