

My Favorite Thing About Haggai

Haggai 1:12-13

September 11, 2021

Gone were the glory days of Israel and Solomon's Temple.... For 70 years God's people lived in their **self-created** exile, but just as Isaiah had prophesied, Cyrus the Great granted the Jews freedom to return to Palestine. Those who did return arrived to find a pile of rubble and nasty neighbors.

After the initial blush of freedom and the excitement of rebuilding the Temple, discouragement and outside interference begun to cause the people to question their priorities. They decided that their difficulties were God's way of tempering their zeal, **"Maybe it's not the right time to rebuild the Temple"**, they thought. They rationalized their choices until work came to a dead stop.

The returning exiles still claimed to be **"God's Chosen People"**, but their actions indicated that they cared more about ease and comfort and **"getting back to normal"**. So, as they waited **"for the right time"** to rebuild the Temple, they built mansions for themselves.

The Temple was the place God had always come to meet with His people. It enabled Him to get as close to them as possible. It was the place that represented relationship. It was the place that pointed to their means of salvation.

- **Exodus 25:8** - Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will **dwell** among them.
- **Exodus 29:42-46** - For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the LORD. **There I will meet you and speak to you;** ⁴³ there also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory. ⁴⁴ "So I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. ⁴⁵ Then I will **dwell** among the Israelites and be their God. ⁴⁶ They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might **dwell** among them. I am the LORD their God.
- **Exodus 40:33-34** - Then Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and altar and put up the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. And so Moses finished the work. ³⁴ Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the **glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.**

Therefore, rebuilding the Temple should have been given precedence, **AND YET** the people had turned away from that symbol of God's presence and toward their own interests. They might not have been worshipping idols, but God was **STILL NOT** first in their lives.

And so, the Temple remained in ruins for 14 years until Haggai showed up.

This book is perhaps the most precisely dated book in all the Bible. Each of Haggai's sermons can be dated to an exact day, during a 15-week period, in the 2nd year of the reign of Darius the Great (522-486 BC).

- **Message 1 – 1:1-11 (August 29, 520 BC) – Rebuke for leaving the Temple in ruins and challenge to resume construction.**
- **Message 2 – 2:1-9 (October 17, 520 BC) – Future glory of the Temple.**
- **Message 3 – 2:10-19 (December 18, 520 BC) – Future blessing for the people.**
- **Message 4 – 2:20-23 (December 18, 520 BC) – personal message for Zerubbabel.**

Which brings us to My Favorite Thing About HAGGAI – Message 1: PRIORITIES – FAITHFULNESS – OBEDIENCE – COOPERATION

In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai **"How is it that you are living in mansions while my house lies in ruins? Think about this very carefully.... You have put a lot of effort into improving your physical lives. You plant your crops, but your harvests aren't very good. You never have enough to eat or drink, your clothes are not sufficient to keep out the cold and there is a hole in your wallet."**

The **"Chosen's"** PRIORITIES were confused and they still viewed **FAITHFULNESS** as a one-way street ---- They expected God to be faithful to them ---- They expected a homeland. They expected comfortable living. They expected good crops and full stomachs. They expected all the blessings that come with being **"God's Chosen People"** while choosing not to return the favor.

Faith is belief in the assurance of God's word and all that he has done. **Faithfulness** is living in accordance with that truth.

Faith = belief leads to Faithfulness = action:

- **Hebrews 11:4** - By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did.
- **Hebrews 11:7** - By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark
- **Hebrews 11:8** - By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.
- **Hebrews 11:22** - By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.
- **Hebrews 11:23** - By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born,
- **Hebrews 11:29** - By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land;

All these people were still living by faith when they died.

Continuing.... ***"So, don't just say 'We are God's Chosen People' do something about it. Prove it. Get your priorities straight. Honor Me with your effort. Take your saws, go up to the mountains, bring back some timber and rebuild My house, so that I may take pleasure in it."***

In response, the leadership and the people did something almost unheard of in Old Testament Scripture ---- they OBEYED!

"Then Zerubbabel and Joshua and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice God and the message of Haggai. 'Woo Hoo', said the Lord. Go tell My people, 'I am with you'. So, the LORD stirred the spirit of Zerubbabel and Joshua and the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God....." {Haggai 1:1-15 – Roshelle's Revised English Version}

They CHOSE to COOPERATE with God and that task, which had seemed so impossible, was completed in just 4 years.

So, the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia. ¹⁵ The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. {Ezra 6:14-15}

Have you considered your ways today?

Priorities: What takes priority in your life? Is God #1 or is He somewhere down the list behind plenty of \$\$\$ in the bank, a big house, a good job, an excellent school district..... etc., etc., etc., Are your priorities for your life the same as God's priorities for your life? Who holds the pen of your life story – You or God?

- **Matthew 6:33** – Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Faithfulness: A person can speak all he wants and use flowery language and make all sorts of promises about accomplishing this and that – but the truth is revealed in what he **ACTUALLY DOES**.

The truth of someone's priorities is not found in his words but in his actions. Does your faithfulness match up with your claims of faith?

- **James 2:17-23** - In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead..... ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that -- and shudder. ²⁰ You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹ Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend.

Obedience: Faithfulness and Obedience go hand in hand. Are you obedient to the commands of God? ***"Go up the mountain, bring down the timber and rebuild."*** ***"Don't just say you're My people ---- Get up and do what I have asked you to do."***

- **Deuteronomy 30:19-20** - This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live ²⁰ and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- **Deuteronomy 32:46-47** - Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. ⁴⁷ They are not just idle words for you-- they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.

Cooperation: When our priorities are straight and our faith has become a verb and our obedience is immediate and joyful – God says, ***"Woo Hoo --- Let's go! I am with you!"***

- **Joshua 1:2-9** - Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them-- to the Israelites. ³ I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. ⁴ Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates-- all the Hittite country-- to the Great Sea on the west. ⁵ No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. ⁶ "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. ⁷ Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸ Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."
- **John Huss** – One man and God is a majority

That's why **PRIORITIES – FAITHFULNESS – OBEDIENCE – COOPERATION** are **My Favorite Thing About HAGGAI**.