

### Good Results of Haggai's First Sermon to Judah

#### Haggai 1:9-15

**Haggai 1:9-15** - *"You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the Lord of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. <sup>10</sup> Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. <sup>11</sup> For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands."*

*<sup>12</sup> 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 presence of the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, spoke the Lord's message to the people, saying, "I am with you, says the Lord." <sup>14</sup> So 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 sixth month, in the second year of King Darius."*

#### Background Notes

When the Jewish people returned from captivity in Babylon, they began rebuilding the Temple that the Babylonian armies destroyed when Jerusalem was conquered. However, they became discouraged and lethargic about the Temple project. They had a change of heart and a change of priorities. They began spending their time and efforts on building and beautifying their own houses, while the Temple, the house of the Lord, remained in ruins. God was displeased.

It took the motivating ministries of two post-exilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to get the people started on the building project again. Ezra 5:1-2 - *"Then the prophets Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them."*

In 529BC, Haggai gave a challenging sermon, urging the people to resume work on rebuilding the house of the Lord. When we compare the dates given in the first and last verses of Haggai 1, we see that 23 days went by after Haggai gave his sermon. Then the people started rebuilding, and four years later the Temple was completed (Ezra 6:14-16).

The beautiful Temple built by King Solomon was the first Jewish Temple. The Temple that was rebuilt under Zerubbabel was the second Jewish Temple. Many years later, around the time of Christ, Herod the Great expanded and beautified this Second Temple. Thus the Jewish people consider Herod's Temple to be the "Second Temple" (not the third temple). The Romans destroyed the Second Temple in 70AD. Not one stone remains upon another of the Second Temple itself, just as our Lord predicted, although parts of the stone platform on which the Temple stood still remain. The "Western Wall" (formerly called the "Wailing Wall"), where Jews worship in Jerusalem today, is part of the western wall of the platform on which this Temple stood.

By the way, the "Darius" mentioned in these verses is not the same "Darius" in the book of Daniel. In Daniel, the Darius was King Darius the Mede. In Haggai, the Darius was King Darius I of Persia, who began his reign in 522BC.

## Doctrinal / Teaching Points

### 1. Wrong priorities result in loss of blessing.

*"You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the Lord of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands" (v9-11).*

How descriptive! The Lord "blew away" the small amount that the people brought home from the harvest. Nothing lasts long if the Lord decides to blow it away! You may think you have the most secure investments, but if the Lord decides to blow them away - I'm so sorry! They're gone! And He may do just that if there's a need to teach you a few lessons - if your priorities are upside down.

In the Middle East, dew is very important for the productivity of the land, but God withheld the dew. Verse 10: *"Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit."* The three basic crops in Israel were grain, grapes, and olive oil. Notice that God called for a drought on all three.

In fact, God purposely withheld progress and blessing from every area in which the people were trying to get ahead. *"For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands" (v11).*

Why would God do this? Verse 9 gives the answer: *"Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house."* Wrong priorities result in loss of blessing.

And God had warned the people well in advance. Part of God's covenant with the people said if they made God # One in their lives, He would bless them. But if they demoted God to a lower priority, then He would not bless them. What would be the result of reversed priorities? Listen to what the Lord said in Leviticus 26:19-20: *"I will break the pride of your power. I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit."*

Also in Deuteronomy 28:38-40 the Lord said, *"You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. You shall plant vineyards and tend them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worms shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off."*

So it wasn't that He didn't give them some advance warning. It was part of His covenant with them! And it happened - just as God had warned the people of Israel.

Does this doctrinal point - "Wrong priorities result in loss of blessing" - still hold true today? Yes, it does - but with this difference. **Material** blessings are not guaranteed for the Christian. In the Old Testament, God promised material and spiritual blessings if His people had the proper priorities, and loss of material and spiritual blessings if the people had wrong priorities.

In the New Testament we find that all promised blessings for the Christian are **spiritual** blessings. God may choose to give us material blessings as well, but they're not guaranteed. In fact, when a Christian is prospering, and has material possessions, and everything seems to be going well - this does not necessarily mean that the Christian's priorities are right. God may allow even a carnal Christian to prosper materially. But one thing is sure: the worldly Christian whose priorities are upside down will **not be blessed spiritually**. No exceptions. The blessings are available, but the worldly Christian will not be enjoying and appropriating these spiritual blessings. God will not and cannot bless us if our priorities are backwards. Wrong priorities result in loss of blessing.

Do you want the Lord's blessing on your life and home? Do you want the fruit of the Spirit to be seen in your life? Do you want to enjoy the spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ? Then straighten out your priorities and put the Lord first, in big decisions and small decisions - because wrong priorities result in loss of blessing.

## 2. Right priorities result in lots of blessing.

*"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 presence of the Lord." And verse 14, "So 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" (v12).*

Any preacher will tell you that this is one of the greatest events in the Bible! Why? Because the people not only **listened** to Haggai's sermon, but they also **acted** on it! There's nothing more discouraging for a preacher of God's Word than to have people say "Nice sermon" - and then do nothing about it. (Believe me, I've had that experience.) But on the other hand, there's nothing more encouraging and uplifting than to see people moved by a sermon – moved to the point of taking action on what they've heard!

Here we see a very rare response to a sermon: the people had a complete change of heart! They totally reversed their priorities, and they started to rebuild the Temple. For this obedience and change of priorities, the Lord began to bless the people once again with material blessings (as we'll see in chapter 2).

One of the greatest spiritual blessings is this: *"I am with you," says the Lord.* Can you think of any greater spiritual blessing? This blessing is available to every believer today. In Hebrews 13:5 the Lord said, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

Do you know the intimate presence of the Lord in your life - not just for salvation, but also in day-to-day living? You can, if you get your priorities straight. That's what God's Word is teaching here to believers today.

Don't expect to know and experience the blessing of the close presence of the Lord in your life if you only talk to the Lord when you're sick, or out of a job, or in trouble, or if you happen to think of it. Set your priorities straight, and you will experience the great blessing of the Lord's presence in your life - like you've never known before! In fact, you will experience all kinds of spiritual blessings. (Read about them in Ephesians 1.) Right priorities result in lots of blessing.

## **Practical Application**

### **Will this minor prophet affect your major priorities?**

We all have our major priorities. But the question we must answer is, "Are my priorities in line with the Word of God?"

The book of Haggai has affected my priorities. I have to go through the book of Haggai every year, because one of the courses I teach is Old Testament Survey. And every time I go through this book the Lord speaks to me about my priorities. Haggai has affected my priorities.

How about you? If you're a believer, you will meet Haggai in Heaven. Suppose he asks you whether or not you read his book? Will you be able to say "yes" (because you're here for this series on Haggai). But suppose he asked you whether his book has affected your life? That's an important question. Will this minor prophet affect your major priorities?