

### Haggai's Fourth and Final Sermon

#### Haggai 2:20-23

**Haggai 2:20-23** - *“And again the word of the Lord came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying, “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying:*

*‘I will shake heaven and earth.*

*I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms.*

*I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them.*

*The horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.*

*‘In that day,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘I will take you, Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel,’ says the Lord, ‘and will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you,’ says the Lord of hosts.”*

#### Background Notes

There are three “post-exilic” prophetic books in the Old Testament: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. All three of these Minor Prophets spoke to the Jewish people after their return from the 70-year captivity in Babylon. That's why they're called “postexilic” - after the exile.

In 538BC, the Persian emperor Cyrus issued a decree that allowed the Jews in Babylon to return to their homeland. This edict is mentioned in Ezra 1 and 2 Chronicles 36. *“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, ‘Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up!’”* (2 Chronicles 36:22-23).

The edict of Cyrus still exists today. The Cyrus Cylinder, with this inscribed edict, was excavated in Babylon in 1879, and is in the British Museum in London.

About 50,000 Jews, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, returned to Judah as a result of this decree. Of course God was working behind the scenes! But when the Jews returned there was no Temple in Jerusalem. The beautiful Temple built by Solomon had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian armies in 586BC.

Under Zerubbabel's leadership, it wasn't long before the people started to rebuild the Temple. The foundation was laid in about 536 BC, but then opposition arose from the surrounding provinces. The people became discouraged and lethargic, and they stopped rebuilding. In addition, they became more interested in building their own houses than in building the House of the Lord. Their priorities were backwards.

So for 15-16 more years the Temple lay in ruins. Then the Lord raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to motivate the people to resume the Temple building project. In 520BC, in a four-month period, Haggai gave four fiery sermons to stir up the people, and to exhort and encourage the people to complete the Temple. These sermons comprise the book of Haggai. Each sermon is introduced with the words, "The word of the Lord came to Haggai."

Notice that the fourth sermon, found in Haggai 2:20-23, was not addressed to the people in general, but to Zerubbabel in particular: *"And again the word of the Lord came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying, "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah" (v20-21).*

So this final sermon was especially given to encourage Zerubbabel in his faithful and courageous service. Haggai's fourth and final sermon was given as an encouragement to Zerubbabel, with the promise of great events to come in the future. And "Zerubbabel's Temple" (as it's sometimes called), or the Second Temple, was completed in four years, in 516BC.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. There will be a great shake-up in the future.

*"Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying:*

*'I will shake heaven and earth.*

*I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms.*

*I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them;*

*The horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother" (v21-22).*

These verses sound very similar to verses 6-7, don't they? Look again at those verses. The Lord was speaking through Haggai: *"I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations..."*

When will the time of this great "shake-up" and overthrow of nations happen? As we mentioned in our study of verses 6-7, we believe that time is associated with the Lord's second coming. Listen to the words of our Lord in His Olivet discourse about the end times: *"And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:24-27).*

The "times of the Gentiles" mentioned in Luke 21 will only come to an end when our Lord returns to earth. This is the time when the image of Daniel 2, representing world powers, will be toppled, crushed to pieces, and blown away. Then the kingdom of our Lord will be set up on this earth. Daniel 2:44 - *"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."*

And the great battle of Armageddon, mentioned in the book of Revelation, is part of this end-time shake-up. According to Revelation 16, all the nations of this world will be gathered together for war. But the Lord will return and overthrow these nations!

Haggai 2:22 says that at that time the Lord will cause so much confusion that the warriors will fight one another - even against those in their own ranks: *"I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them; the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother."* In connection with that time, Zechariah 12:4 says: *"In that day," says the Lord, "I will strike every horse with confusion, and its rider with madness."*

But out of this great future shake-up, our Lord's glorious Kingdom will come. This message was encouraging for Zerubbabel - and it should be for us as well. The Lord and His Kingdom will be supreme!

This should be our mindset when we think of the great shake-up to come in the future.

## 2. There will be a great Sovereign in the future.

*"In that day," says the Lord of hosts, "I will take you, Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel," says the Lord, "and will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you," says the Lord of hosts" (v23).*

Remember - Zerubbabel was the leader of the Jews who had returned from exile in Babylon. He also led the project of rebuilding of the Temple. Verse 23 contains a promise the Lord made to Zerubbabel. In a future day, when all Gentile kingdoms will be destroyed, and the Lord will set up His glorious kingdom - *in that day* Zerubbabel will be made a *"signet ring."*

In ancient days the signet ring was used as a seal of authority. It was especially significant when it was associated with the crown, the throne or the scepter. So Zerubbabel is promised a place of authority in the future. What does that mean?

A few commentators take this verse to mean that Zerubbabel, in his resurrected body, will have a significant place of authority under Christ when He is reigning as King in His future glorious earthly Kingdom, with headquarters in Jerusalem. However, most commentators see Zerubbabel as prefiguring or foreshadowing Christ in this passage. In fact, Jewish commentaries see this Scripture as Messianic. In other words, the promise made to Zerubbabel in Haggai 2 means that the Messiah would come **through his lineage**. Thus Zerubbabel is representative, or a *type* (or picture) of Christ – just as David is a *type* of Christ. He foreshadows Christ as the coming King.

The genealogies of Jesus Christ provided in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 reveal that Zerubbabel is in the line of the Messiah. It's interesting that Matthew's genealogy traces Jesus Christ's lineage back through Joseph, his earthly father, while Luke's genealogy is Jesus Christ's lineage back through (his mother) Mary, his mother - **yet Zerubbabel is named in both lines!**

Zerubbabel is found in the line of Jesus Christ's **legal** right to the throne - from David to Joseph - in Matthew, and in Jesus Christ's **biological** line - from David to Mary - in Luke!

What a great and encouraging promise for Zerubbabel! And what a great and encouraging promise for us as well! The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, prefigured in Zerubbabel, and descendant of Zerubbabel, will reign over this earth.

There will be a great Sovereign in the future!

## Practical Application

### Are you ready for the future?

How close are we to these end-time events that are predicted in the closing verses of the book of Haggai?

We don't know for certain how close we are, but it sure seems like current events are moving quickly in that direction. Look at the return of the Jews to the land, since the birth of the state of Israel. Look at the way the groundwork is being laid in the Middle East for the great seven-year covenant prophesied in Daniel 9. Look at the way circumstances in Europe seem to be moving towards an end-time world power, as seen in the books of Daniel and Revelation. And look at rapidly advancing technology that makes global control and governance more likely in the future.

In view of all the prophetic events on the horizon, let me ask you: **Are you ready for the future?**

I'm not just asking whether or not you're a believer. That's square one! You must trust Christ as your Savior in order to be saved from your sins and rescued from a lost eternity in hell. If you're not a true Christian, you're not ready for the future.

But I'm also asking Christians: Are **you** ready for the future? Are you living your life in view of the future? A great shake-up is coming. Material investments and possessions will mean nothing then. When the Lord returns to earth, only eternal investments will count. Everything else will be blown away.

So as we come to the close of this little book of Haggai, let's ask ourselves this important question: **Are you ready for the future?**