

HAGGAI

DON'T MAKE A BAD INVESTMENT!

THE PROPHETS SPEAK OF JESUS

HISTORY BY GOD'S DETERMINATION

- ▶ Through Jeremiah, God had decreed 70 years of exile, imposed by the Babylonians, as punishment for His people's covenant unfaithfulness—one year for every seven years of Sabbath unfaithfulness (Jeremiah 25.11; 29.10).
- ▶ In the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede (of the Medo-Persian alliance that conquered the Babylonian empire), Daniel recognized the timing of current events in light of God's larger plans for humanity and prayed that God would forgive the sins of His people and restore them to honor His name (Daniel 9.1-19).

- In the first year of his control of the Persian Empire, Cyrus (who succeeded Darius) issued a ruling, recorded by Ezra in his account:

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

“This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “ ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them.

- ▶ This was not a personal decision on his part; 176 years earlier, God had promised that he would raise up a king by the name of Cyrus who would carry out God's pre-determined plans (Isaiah 45.1-4). At the time of Isaiah's prophecy, Israel was secure, the Babylonian empire was non-existent, and Cyrus' grandparents had not been born!
- ▶ Many Jews chose not to return; they had adapted to the land of exile and built a stable life for their families. They had no desire to be involved in the hardships and difficulty of returning and rebuilding the place that represented God and His purposes.

- ▶ Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the first group of exiles returned; Haggai and Zechariah were part of this group. (Two subsequent groups would return under the leadership of Ezra who would restore the people to covenant commitment, and subsequently, Nehemiah, who would establish external security and institute Sabbath protocols.)
- ▶ Under the political leadership of Zerubbabel who was a descendent of King David, and Joshua the high priest, a descendant of Aaron, the altar was to be rebuilt, worship resumed, and the work initiated for the replacement Temple.

- ▶ Discouraged by the laborious process and distracted by their own concerns, the work on the Temple came to a halt. The people turned their attention to their own lives and success. God sent a word of rebuke through the prophet Haggai—

“How is it that it’s the ‘right time’ for you to live in your fine new homes while the Home, God’s Temple, is in ruins?”

HAGGAI 1.3 MSG

Through Haggai, The LORD repeatedly warned the people to “give careful thought to your ways” because everyone was busy with their own lives and neglecting the work that would honor God.

A CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING

My days are like the evening shadow;

I wither away like grass.

But You, O LORD, sit enthroned forever;

Your renown endures through all generations.

In the beginning You laid the foundations of the earth,

and the heavens are the work of Your hands.

Like clothing You will change them and they will be discarded.

PSALM 102.11-12, 25-26

- ▶ God's plan for humanity dwarfs my lifespan and anything I do for Him can be temporary, replaceable, and disposable.

- ▶ Additionally, the work of God is laborious, inconvenient, and repetitious. There is always clutter, contrarianism and little to show for my efforts. Better to invest myself in things more essential to my life.
- ▶ Like the people of Haggai's time, discouragement, disillusionment, distractions, and the deification of our own priorities are a constant temptation. We become demotivated and disinclined to invest our time and energy into what seems of little benefit to me.

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

A KEY TAKEAWAY

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

1 CORINTHIANS 15.58

- ▶ With His expression of displeasure and rebuke of their misplaced priorities, God spoke through Haggai to Zerubbabel and Joshua:

But now be strong, Zerubbabel.’ ‘Be strong, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,’ declares the LORD, ‘and work. For I am with you,’ declares the LORD Almighty. ‘This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.’

- ▶ Then, while still speaking, the LORD looked far into the future and described a time when He would shake the heavens and the earth and the one “desired by the nations” would come. Then the Lord spoke again to Zerubbabel, representative of Jesus, and foretold a day when He would overthrow nations and governments—a day that will establish His international kingdom, the New Jerusalem, under the Messiah, the promised heir to David’s throne.

“‘I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you,’ declares the LORD Almighty.”

- ▶ God wanted them, and us, to understand what they could not see: the temple they were building, though unimpressive compared to the previous temple, had a key role in God's present work which ultimately leads to His future work far beyond their lifetimes.
- ▶ It is not what it benefits us, what we prefer, or what gives us satisfaction and security; the ultimate worth of my life will be: have I been faithful to God's purposes in my lifetime and have I given myself fully to the work of the Lord as Jesus did?

For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.