

Seven Bible Studies 2017

Prophecy

November 10: Haggai 1-2 (John Morris)

Reading for November 11, 2017

HAGGAI

Happy Friday, everyone!

Today's reading introduces us to the first of the three post-exilic prophets. Haggai began his prophetic ministry on August 29, 520 BC (1:1), more than fifteen years after the first exiles had returned to the Promised Land, and at a time when they desperately needed to be stirred up to good works.

Upon returning in 538 BC, the exiles had immediately set about rebuilding the temple (Ezra 3:1-11). Not long thereafter, however, the locals began to oppose their efforts, and eventually succeeded in convincing the Persian government (Artaxerxes) to forcibly shut down construction. Revival was stymied. The faithful would have to patiently pray for a change, and wait on the LORD to see what He would do. And perhaps they did at first. They just didn't wait long enough.

Nothing changed during Artaxerxes' administration, but then Darius I assumed power in 522 BC. Here, now, was an opportunity to appeal the decision of the previous administration! Or just resume construction, and see what the new government would do. But no such action was taken. Life had become comfortable. Life at home was good. The idea of working on the LORD's house had lost its appeal. Two years of Darius' reign passed, and the returned exiles didn't return to their work.

Enter Haggai.

- 1:4- "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"
- 1:9- "...My house...is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house."
- 1:5, 7- "Consider your ways!"

Haggai faithfully preached a word of exhortation to the leaders and to the people. And they responded! It took 23 days (1:1, 15), but they responded. In all seriousness, I've wondered if one of those "old-fashioned," protracted meetings might benefit us in more ways than we might imagine. I've heard it said to at the end of a week meeting that it seemed like the momentum was just beginning to build. I felt the same way. What if such a meeting were to go longer?

After the work had persisted for a month, God offered words of encouragement to the people to help them keep on keepin' on (2:1-9). These words included a prophecy of the coming King and the coming kingdom (2:6-9; Heb. 12:26-28).

After the work had persisted for three months (2:10-14), God called the people, through Haggai, to accompany their labor and sacrifices with moral purity. And He promised them that

the days of poor harvests and hard times would now be coming to an end (1:6-11; 2:15-19). Interesting that He waited three months before He told them that. Thoughts?

Finally, Haggai ends with some promises. God will throw down the Gentile kingdoms that have opposed Him and His people, and will accomplish His purposes through “Zerubbabel My servant” (2:23). This is one of those “dual prophecies.” The LORD speaks here to “Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah” (the man who would have been king had the nation been independent), but also speaks to Another, One who would be a descendant of Zerubbabel, as He was of David (Mt. 1:12-16)—Jesus Christ, the builder of the third and final temple, the church (cf. Zech. 4:9; Mt. 16:18).

Comment:

Butch O’Neal:
Thank you, John!

Comment:

Joanne Caffie:
In my little mind I feel that God sometimes need me to eat a few pieces if humble pie before revealing greater things to me. I have learned that humble pie only taste good with the 1st few bites. 😞 But as I continue to eat more my focus is turned away from myself and more towards Him. #justmyhumbleopinion

Replies:

Joanne Caffie:
Ok, so now my little mind is trying 2 get bigger & after re-reading this post I can't figure out y I posted this reply 🤔🤔🤔

So my question is did God wait 2 reveal this information ir did Hagai wait 2 reveal this information? Because my little mind jumped 2 the conclusion that God waited which is y I came up with the humble pie scenario. #thoughts2clearmyunderstanding?

John Morris:

Joanne Caffie: Since the LORD Himself includes the date in His words (2:18), the timing of the promise must have been His doing. It came just after the time of planting; hence, His reference to the seed not being in the barn, but the plants not having yet yielded fruit (2:19). I think the delay of three months may simply have been God giving the people time to demonstrate perseverance (an important quality of true repentance). Were they going to follow through on this rebuilding effort...or was this going to be like a lot of New Year's resolutions? Once perseverance had been demonstrated, the promise came! Good things come to those who wait.

Charles Fry:

The prophetic word came at the right time, the time when God wanted Haggai to speak. God generally dealt with prophetic messages in successive revelations, not all at once, with individual prophets and connections between prophets. After three months of effort, it was the right time for a quiz, a reminder, a pep talk.

John Morris:

Charles Fry: His timing was perfect and purposeful...and no doubt, for multiple reasons. Thanks for this.

Charles Fry:

Our timing was pretty much simultaneous, John Morris. 😊

Various recent lessons and challenges have pushed that theme of "just the right time" and "when the time had fully come" in my thoughts.

Joanne Caffie:

So I guess my theory (or thinking) of chewing on some humble pie for a couple of months or so was headed in the right direction. It just makes sense that the Lord waits to see if there will be even a slight commitment towards being obedient

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Amen, John! What an inspiration. The people of Judah listened! "Be strong and work!" (2:4) David used these words when he encouraged Solomon to build the temple. Haggai continued to preach to the Jews, encouraging them with the hope of future glory in the temple and a victory to come over the enemies of God's people. It takes time to build momentum but once it's done look at all that's accomplished for God's glory!