

# Haggai

Haggai, one of the 12 shorter books of prophecy, dates his messages to 520 BC, the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Darius the king of Persia. The first message in 1:1-11 was at the end of August, with successive dates in the text through mid-December of the same year.

Primary characters, also named in Ezra and Zechariah, are Zerubbabel, a prince of Judah, descended from Jehoiachin, and Joshua/Jeshua, the high priest. This Zerubbabel is also in the genealogy of Joseph in Matthew 1:12-13.

The emphasis of the prophets messages was the urgent need for the returned exiles in Jerusalem to stop lingering in fear or distraction and build the temple of the LORD. After an initial surge of joyful enthusiasm in 536 BC, as reported by Ezra, the temple project had been abandoned. Haggai's message was that things weren't going well, work wasn't paying off as it should, because they were neglecting their duty to God, the source of blessings. "Consider your ways" in 1:7.

This time, the leaders and the people obeyed the prophets (1:12).

The prophet's message in 2:3 was a reminder that the temple Solomon built, destroyed by the Babylonians, was much grander than the structure they were working on. Nevertheless, God was pleased with their effort, and what mattered then and always was doing what they could with what they had for the glory of God. "Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts" (2:4). The same covenant as Exodus, the same Spirit to guide them. Then God's word through the prophet lapses into a future vision of great things God would do in 2:6-9. The "shaking" promised should remind us backwards of Mt Sinai in Exodus 19-20, and forwards of the kingdom of heaven in Hebrews 12:18-29. The glory of the 2<sup>nd</sup> temple would come until God came in the person of Jesus Christ and initiated the kingdom of peace for all nations.

The very work of building in obedience to God would bring blessings beyond any imperfect efforts in their own behalf. (2:10-19)

When Haggai spoke to Zerubbabel, the heir of David, in 2:20-23, the message again was about the anointed one to come, the shaking of the kingdoms of the world and establishing the kingdom of peace through Jesus. Zerubbabel was chosen by God to be the mark of authority, as a prince and a temple builder he exemplified what the future Son of David would be and do, and Jesus' royal heritage as the legal son of Joseph makes him the heir of Zerubbabel.