

# A LOOK AT THE BOOK HAGGAI A TIME TO REBUILD

Ralph Porter

Haggai is the first of the post-exilic prophetic books, written after Israel has begun to return to the land.

## Pre-exilic Prophets:

Background: Sin, rebellion, idolatry  
Purpose: To call God's people to repentance  
Message: Judgment is coming!

## Exilic Prophets

Background: Israel has been taken into captivity.  
Purpose: To comfort and encourage God's people.  
Message: God will restore them and bring them back to the land.

## Post-exilic Prophets

Background: Israel has begun to return to the land.  
Purpose: To encourage God's people to rebuild the temple, the city, and their own lives.  
Message: Messiah is coming! We need to get ready for His coming!

## AUTHOR

The prophet Haggai is unknown except for his function of arousing Zerubbabel and Joshua to action in the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

He, together with his contemporary Zechariah, saw the importance of the presence of the temple in the land.

They motivated the people so that the temple was rebuilt.

## DATE

The prophet ministers in the period in which Darius was reigning as king over the Persian Empire (Iran).  
Not the same Darius as the Governor of the Chaldean territory (Babylon to the Mediterranean Sea) during Cyrus' reign, in Daniel's day.  
That Darius may have been an ancestor of this Darius since they use the same dynastic title.

Haggai was written in the second year of his reign, 520 B.C.

## BACKGROUND

After the seventy year period of Jewish captivity ended, 42,360 Jews returned to the land under the edict of Cyrus issued in 539 B.C.

Their first task was to establish the worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem.

They began by building an altar on the old temple site.

They relaid the foundation for the temple (Ezra 3:10), but were stopped at that point by the opposition of the Samaritans.

For sixteen years the temple was ignored.

They rebuilt their homes and businesses, but avoided reconstruction of the walls and temple.

## PURPOSE AND THEME

The people are living comfortably (1:4), but nothing is being done for the Lord's house.

The prophets came to exhort the people to build the temple.

Once they began, the temple was completed in four years (Ezra 6:15).

Though the events in Israel were of greatest importance, the events in Persia were incorporated into the thoughts and messages of the prophets.

Reference is made in Haggai to "the shaking of the nations."

He saw this as preliminary to the advent of Messiah.

In the period preceding Haggai's ministry, Cambyses had died and been replaced Pseudo-Smerdis—a false heir to the throne.

Cambyses had secretly killed his real brother, Smerdis.

He went off to fight against Egypt.

On his return from the battle, he received word that "Smerdis" had claimed the throne.

Rather than prove that "Smerdis" was a fake, by confessing to the murder of his brother, he committed suicide.

Darius, a military leader under Cambyses who knew the truth about the fraud, created a rebellion against Pseudo-Smerdis and defeated him.

The rebellious spirit in the air encouraged others to do the same.

Nineteen rebellions arose against Darius, led by nine kings who wanted to break loose and be independent.

Haggai viewed this as "the shaking of nations" the prophets had announced, which evidenced the possible imminent coming of Messiah.

Haggai used this shaking of the nations as a means of motivation, for he desired that Messiah's temple be prepared for Him when He came.

## ORGANIZATION

Haggai is composed of five separate messages, delivered within a four month period.

Each of these messages was intended to motivate the people in their preparation and construction of the temple—but they deal with much more than *just* the temple! God is concerned about their hearts also!

## ARGUMENT

### FIRST MESSAGE: REBUKE 1:1-11

#### HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION 1:1

Haggai's first message was delivered on September 1, 520 B.C.

[1st of Elul = Aug/Sep], two years after the reign of Darius began.

Delivered to Zerubbabel—descendant of David—heir to throne.

Delivered to Joshua—descendant of Aaron—heir to High Priest's office.

Delivered to the remnant—the people who have come back to the land.

## **CONFUSION OF PRIORITIES 1:2-4**

It rebukes those who are saying the time isn't yet right to build a house for the Lord, when they all live in comfortable paneled houses.

### **"Wrong time" 1:2**

The people say the time is not right.

### **Fancy houses 1:3-4**

Yet they live in fancy houses.

## **CONDITION OF DISSATISFACTION 1:5-6**

He reminds them of their discontent with their present state.

## **COMMISSION TO BUILD 1:7-8**

The prophet informs them that they are dissatisfied because God will not let them be satisfied until they build His house.

He exhorts them to begin construction of the Lord's house at once. (1:5-11)

*What's the real purpose that's worth living for (1:8)?*

## **CAUSE OF DISSATISFACTION 1:9-11**

The cause of their dissatisfied condition: failure to build God's house.

=> *THEIR REACTION: 12*

## **SECOND MESSAGE: COMMENDATION 1:12-15**

The second message was delivered 24 days later.  
[Sept. 24 = 24th of Elul (Aug/Sep)]

### **TRANSITION: POSITIVE RESPONSE 1:12**

They're commended for their positive response to the first message.

### **MESSAGE: PROMISED SUPPORT 1:13**

Because of the faith they have exercised in beginning the temple, God promises to be with them.

Divine support promised.

### **THEIR REACTION: POPULAR MOTIVATION 1:14-15**

The people moved to action.

The Lord stirs up the people and they work together on His house.

### **THIRD MESSAGE: ENCOURAGEMENT 2:1-9**

The third message comes three weeks later.  
[Oct. 21 = 21st of Tishri (Sep/Oct)]

#### **PREVIOUS GLORY COMPARED 2:1-3**

The people have examined their resources and recognize that their temple will not be like Solomon's. 3  
The descriptions of their ancestors had left them with vivid impressions of a glorious temple.  
They realized that this temple would hardly approach the glory of that one.

#### **PROMISE OF DIVINE PRESENCE 2:4-5**

The important thing isn't the building! It's God's presence!  
He promises that HE will be with them.

The message of the prophet brings encouragement for the Lord promised His presence. *"I am with you!"*

#### **PROMISE OF DIVINE OCCUPANCY 2:6-9**

The Lord promises a day when the nations would be shaken and the precious things the nations desire would come to Israel.

Traditional interpretations apply this affirmation to the coming of "the Desire of all nations," the One they desire, that is, Messiah.

However, both Hebrew and Septuagint versions clearly indicate that what's desired is plural.

Thus it seems more likely that this is a promise of God's blessing to His people. He will pour out on them the things the nations desire.

NASB = "the wealth of all the nations"

NLT = "the treasures of all the nations"

He also promises the return of the Shekinah glory to the temple.

His house will be filled with glory and peace.

It would not be there in a cloud, but in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He would come to *that* temple! => *John 1:14*

### **FOURTH MESSAGE: CLEANSING AND BLESSING 2:10-19**

The fourth message came about two months later.  
[Dec. 24 = 24th of Kislev (Dec/Jan)]

#### **NEED FOR CLEANSING 2:10-14**

Their condition: It drew the attention of the people to their need for cleansing.  
*Everything* is defiled!

Cleansing would be available through the operation of the Levitical system, which could begin again when the temple was built.

## **PROMISE OF BLESSING 2:15-19**

God promises that from the day the foundation was laid, they would receive blessing and prosperity, in place of the lack they experienced before.

Until now there has been NO blessing 15-19a  
From THIS day on, "I will bless you." 19b

Present famine conditions will be transformed into blessing because of their interest in God's house.

The temple is the means by which they receive cleansing and blessing.

God was punishing them for their disobedience—  
That day they laid the foundation  
Now God promises to bless them for their obedience

## **FIFTH MESSAGE: SECURITY 2:20-23**

The fifth message was delivered on the same day as the fourth.

### **PROMISE OF OVERTHROW OF NATIONS 2:20-22**

It promised that though God would shake the nations, in the midst of that shaking, He would provide safety and deliverance for Israel.

### **PROMISE OF SECURITY FOR ZERUBBABEL 2:23**

Zerubbabel was set apart as a sign to the nations that God had not forgotten His people, but that one day He would again place His political ruler in Jerusalem.

Haggai, though presenting five different messages, centers on one thought: the nation was to rebuild the temple.

When they fulfilled their responsibility, God promised to provide their other needs and satisfy the desires of their hearts.

The logical question Haggai suggests for our consideration is: What is the priority in our life? What are *we* living for?

Their own houses and businesses were important, but it wasn't the right time to worry about God's house!  
*What's our priority?*  
*Is living for God and pleasing Him more important to us than living for ourselves and making a profit?*