

# Is This It?

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 08 March 2026

Preacher: Johan DeJong

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, friends. Good morning. We do have the Bible open in front of you at that passage, if you've got one, or your phone, or whatever you're using to access God's Word. If you want to grab a Bible, they're at either door.

Maybe take a moment to do that if you haven't yet. That'd be great. Welcome back to Haggai, part two. Didn't James do a great job last week of showing us how a two and a half thousand year old prophecy still speaks today?

You remember the remnant of Israel had come back from exile? They blotted their copybook and God said, you can't live here anymore. So he'd sent them into exile in Babylon.

But now, as he promised, he brought them back. And their mission is to rebuild the temple, just to catch you up if you weren't around last week. Because the temple is a symbol of God's presence with his people in the Old Testament.

And they're struggling. And we saw last week that God cares about our priorities. Doesn't he? They matter to him. And our priorities get skewed.

[ 1 : 03 ] And when that happens, it doesn't work. Life doesn't work. James is helping us to see that it's always the right time to prioritize building God's house.

To seek first God's kingdom, as the New Testament puts it. And today, we're in chapter two. But before we come to that, shall we just pray? Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you for your word.

We thank you that it speaks today. We thank you that your Holy Spirit can take it and apply it to our hearts and change us. Please help us to see the Lord Jesus as we look now at what you have to say.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. What do we have less of today than we did 50 years ago? There's all kinds of answers.

I think that's probably one of them. You can all come up with different ones. Here's one thing that we have less of today than we did 50 years ago. We've been praying about it. That's peace.

[ 2 : 08 ] Peace out there. Like Ukraine. Iran. Peace in our country. There's probably more division and anger than at any time in the last 20, 30 years.

Peace in here. It's not easy to measure, is it? But I don't think there's been a massive increase of peace in our hearts in the last times.

The good news of the Bible is that we are saved, both from ourselves and from this world by the Lord Jesus, when he dies for us on the cross, paying the price for our sins, reuniting us with himself and with God, and raising us as he is raised.

That is good news, isn't it? We are God's people, back in God's place, fulfilling God's purposes by God's power. That's great.

Isn't it? Is it? It doesn't always feel like it, does it? Let's look at verses 1 to 3. In the second year of King Darius, on the 21st day of the seventh month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai.

[ 3 : 24 ] Speak to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, son of Josedek, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory?

How does it look to you now? Does it not seem like nothing? So here's where the Israelites are at. We're three weeks past chapter one, where James had us last week, and three things have happened since then.

The first is that they have celebrated the Jewish feast of tabernacles. Now that involved living in tents, remembering God's rescue from Egypt, the time living in tents in the wilderness, and importantly, the commemoration of Solomon's first temple, the great one.

So way back before the exile. In other words, Israel's just been reminded, God's people have just been reminded visually, physically, of how amazing the things were that God did in the past. And of how great that temple was. And by comparison, how temporary and ordinary everything seems today. Seems like nothing.

[ 4 : 36 ] Is this it? And the second thing that's happened to the Israelites, is that they spent three weeks looking at a building site. Realizing how big the job is.

Calculating all of the resources that will be needed to move this work forward. Thinking, how many gifted people will we need to pitch in, and where are they? And how much time is this going to cost us?

And where's that going to come from? They've been looking at the stones of the old temple. And thinking, right, so what shape do the stones that we have to get need to be?

And how do we fit them together? They're doing what we're trying to do this year, which is reflecting. What shape are we? What shape is the job?

How are we going to do this? And finally, in these last three weeks, they're supposed to be celebrating the harvest. That's what that festival was for.

[ 5 : 35 ] The time of the year when all their resources, their bank of resources, gets built up again. Except that during this time and the years before and after, we know that the harvests were really bad for Israel.

So they'll have felt they had very little to celebrate, really, and even less to give to God's kingdom. And as we've just been reminded in that reading and in the previous chapter, they're just a remnant. They're a little people. Practically an irrelevance in the world empire that they live in. They're even rebuilt.

What good will the temple do? Is this it? Is this it? They're downhearted.

They're daunted. And God has just put his finger on how they feel, hasn't he? Just like he does with us. There's so much to be thankful for at Bethel at the moment.

[ 6 : 44 ] I hope you feel that. I certainly do. But where are God's great works of the past? We can ask that. Where's the revival? Why does our faith get hijacked?

By the right. And misrepresented by the left. And the mission to share God's news, it's so big, isn't it?

And sometimes seems so difficult. And the need around us, just around us, here, is enormous, isn't it?

And our resources are not. Is this it? And that's before we come to me on a personal level.

Why is it every time I go a step forward in getting rid of that thing that I don't want in my life, because I know it's bad, do I go two steps back? Why am I struggling like this?

[ 7 : 48 ] Why have I still not been restored, rebuilt? Is this all there is to the Christian life? Seems like nothing. No sacred fire in the temple.

Just an absence of glory and an awful lot of graft. Is this it? And whether you're a Christian or not, I think you all have those moments, don't we?

We look around at the building site of the world, and we think, we can look at our lives, a lot of graft for a long time.

Is this it? Do you see what God doesn't do here? He doesn't minimize their feelings. He doesn't deny the reality of the rubble, does he?

In fact, he names it. He talks about it to show us that he knows and he understands how it is. He voices our fears for us to show us that he understands.

[ 8 : 52 ] And so we know that he knows. That's what it says in Hebrews 4, verse 15, isn't it? We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with us, but one who is tested, tempted in every way, just as we are.

That includes being tempted to just chuck it. Is this it? Is this it? If it seems small, here's a story I came across this week that encourages us.

The date is January the 6th, 1850. Colchester, England. It's bitterly cold. And there's a blizzard outside, which means that on a Sunday, most of the worshippers have stayed home.

And at the chapel on Artillery Street, only about a dozen people showed up, and then it becomes apparent that even the pastor is a no-show. And an uneducated man stands up, and he speaks, not very eloquently, from Isaiah 45, verse 22.

And then everybody goes home. They think, what was that for? What they didn't realize is that a 15-year-old boy who wanted shelter from the snowstorm had snuck into the back of the chapel, heard the sermon, and met Jesus.

[10:10] And the name of that boy? Charles Spurgeon. Charles Spurgeon later wrote about that moment. Don't hold back because you cannot preach in St. Paul's.

Be content to talk to one or two in a cottage. You can cook in small pots as well as in big ones. Does it seem small?

God isn't finished speaking. What does he say next? Let's look at verse 4. But now be strong, Zerubbabel declares the Lord. Be strong, Joshua, son of Josedach, the high priest.

Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the Lord. And work, or build, is what the word means. See what he does?

Starting with the leaders, but actually applied to all of us, God says, be strong and build. Now, that can sound like try harder.

[11:18] Can't it? That's what we often hear, isn't it, when we read something like this? We think, I'm going to try harder. And let's be honest, sometimes we should. Sometimes we should.

Sometimes we're willing to try hard at other things. Keeping up with the Joneses. Keeping up with sport. Keeping fit. Keeping in with our friends.

Keeping our heads down. Keeping our pride. Keeping our privacy. Willing to work hard at that. And we're not willing to work hard at building God's house.

There is a reason that God has to remind us to build. It's kind of what we were thinking about last week in chapter one, wasn't it? But primarily, be strong here does not mean try harder.

Let's keep reading. For I am with you, for be, declares the Lord Almighty.

[12:15] This is what I covenanted with you, what I promised you when you came out of Egypt. And my spirit remains with you. So do not fear. He says again what he says in chapter one.

I am with you just as I promised I would be all those years ago when I did those great things and brought you out of Egypt.

And I'm still with you. And the way I stay is by my spirit. So no, God doesn't minimize their problems. Instead, he puts them into perspective by coming and standing next to them.

You're a Lego person. Have you ever played with Lego? Imagine you're a Lego person. In that case, building a Lego temple seems impossible, doesn't it?

The job is huge and you've got those ridiculous little legs. What are you going to do? But if you're a human being in that situation, in a world of Lego people, you not only tower over the building project, but maybe you're even the designer, the one who made the manual for the building in the first place, then it's easy, isn't it?

[13:48] We're the Lego people struggling with the size of the project and our little legs. And God stands next to us, truly human-sized, and he says, I am with you.

And that means that be strong actually means trust that I am with you and that I will come through for you, that I am here helping you.

The first thing that you need to do if you want to be strong is not try harder, it is live in the reality that God is present in your life and that he will come through on his promises.

And Jesus is the proof of that, isn't he? We lean into the power and presence of his Holy Spirit. I am with you. Probably most of you have noticed that there's no temple in Farnham.

So what are we building? James helped us understand that last week. The New Testament tells us. If you turn briefly to 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 16, Paul is talking to the church.

[15:09] 1 Corinthians 3, 16, and he says this, Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives among you?

Can you see the parallel with the verses that we've been reading? And if you look just a little bit further up, same passage, but verse 6, Paul says, I planted the seed of the gospel, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.

Who's decisive in the building work? God is, by his Spirit. So here are some questions to think about. If you are feeling weak and discouraged somewhere in your life, is it because you have not acknowledged God's presence or existence in that place with you?

Or is it because you've invited him in? Yes. Yes, God, I want you to be, but then you've acted as though he's not there. It is not weakness to struggle.

Weakness is acting like God isn't there. I'd love you to just take a moment, maybe close your eyes if that helps you, and just think, where do I feel weak?

[16:27] And take a moment to invite God into that weakness and ask him to stand alongside you in it. Thank you. Thank you.

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's spirit lives among you? I think that means, fairly obviously, that if we're going to be building, we shouldn't be building a business of bricks and mortar, should we?

Instead, we should be building a family. And that means caring for people, giving them time. Instead of giving time and care, primarily, to bricks and mortar things.

Because as we'll see, those things will not last. So here's the challenge for us as a church. As we reflect this year on what we do, how much we do, who does it, how we do it, all of that practical building stuff.

How will we think about that? Will we think about it like this? Not building bricks and mortar. Building hearts and souls.

[18:09] Are we going to decide against doing another activity or bringing another program into our lives? Will we cut that club? That project?

That's really exciting and interesting. But will take us away from people. Will we instead focus on building people like we really believe that that's what Jesus wants us to do.

And that he's really beside us. Encouraging us in that direction. I think living that way, remembering the fact that he is with us, will bring us a measure of peace as we go through life.

But it's not everything. And God has more to say to us from this passage. Let's look on in verse 6. This is what the Lord Almighty says.

In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth. The sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations. If you think the church is just bricks and mortar.

[19:23] Or some kind of social club. Then it's easy to dismiss it, isn't it? Don't do that. Don't dismiss the church as a social club. Or just a relic of some fading glory.

Because the head of the church is coming back. That's what this passage is telling us. And when he comes back, it will literally rock your world. And unless you've built on him, not one brick of the house you built will stay on top of another.

Not one. Here's how one of the commentators puts it. The kingdoms of the world are but scaffolding for God's spiritual temple to be thrown down when their purpose is accomplished.

It will be like a holy hurricane in Legoland. So we need to run to the shelter of Jesus.

And in case you think, yeah, that's just the Old Testament, isn't it? Let's look at Hebrews chapter 12. Where this part of Haggai is quoted.

[20:38] Hebrews chapter 12, verse 25. See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks.

That's Jesus. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time, speaking of Haggai's time, his voice shook the earth.

But now he has promised, once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens. The words once more indicating the removal of things that can be shaken.

That is, created things. So that what cannot be shaken may remain. That's us. As we build on the Lord Jesus. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.

For our God is a consuming fire. So don't wonder if you're feeling it yet. Don't put it off until it's more convenient.

[21:52] Don't wonder if you're good enough. Because Israel's whole history is one of God being faithful to a nation that is not good enough. Don't expect all your questions to be answered.

Don't wait for the moment. The moment is now. Go to Jesus. We live in an instant world, don't we? Send someone a WhatsApp message. And if you don't get a reply for two days, you kind of start going, What's happening? Can't wait more than five minutes for a barista coffee, can we?

As we start tapping the old foot. My kids love the Despicable Me films. Have you watched those? I think this scene describes it quite well. We don't like to wait, do we?

Keep reading. I will shake all the nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with my glory, says the Lord Almighty.

[ 22 : 57 ] The silver is mine and the gold is mine, declares the Lord Almighty. The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house, says the Lord Almighty.

In other words, the best is yet to come. We can't wait. But the best is yet to come. It will be better than it is now.

So, pick a moment in your heart, in your memory, in your life. The most powerful, heartwarming, life-changing moment that you can remember as a Christian, when you've known and felt the presence of the Lord Jesus in your life.

In a distinct way. Pick a moment like that. Hold it in your head. Now hear God say, something better is coming.

New Testament, Jesus says, I will build my church, doesn't he? That's talking about us, his temple. And when he returns, he'll finish that building work. And what Haggai is saying is all the nations then will gather in joyful celebration as his family.

[ 24 : 11 ] And that is also when he will rebuild the broken temple of my body and mind. Because we struggle with that too, don't we? The best is yet to come.

Did you see that little phrase, the desire of nations? What is desired by all nations will come. What is that? What's the desire of nations? What is it that we all want?

What is there less of in the world than 50 years ago? It's peace, isn't it? We just want peace and freedom under a good king.

Peace with each other. Peace between us and the one who's in charge. Verse 9. And in this place, I will grant peace.

Declares the Lord Almighty. Then if you recognise this man, he's called Kizito Ihego.

[ 25 : 19 ] He's Rwandan. If you know your Rwandan history, were you around in the 90s, you'll remember the Rwandan genocide. One of the most brutal in history. In about 100 days, 800,000 people died.

Absolutely tore the nation apart. People were left living next door to those who'd murdered their families. Eventually the fighting stopped. But not quite the same thing as peace coming, is it?

Among the survivors was this man, Kizito Ihego. He'd lost members of his own family. Had the same trauma. But he also had a remarkable gift for singing and music.

And as Rwanda struggles to rebuild, he starts singing and writing songs. And they're not songs of anger or revenge. They're songs about forgiveness.

About sorrow. About enemies living as neighbours. They're gospel songs. So slowly people start to listen.

[ 26 : 28 ] And people who had survived that trauma heard their pain in those songs. And those who had taken part in the violence heard a call to repent and be reconciled. And through that music and his concerts and the peace foundation that he eventually started, he travels the whole country encouraging people to mourn together, speak honestly about the past and rebuild.

One person with a voice and a message helped real peace and healing to begin. In the end, he dies in suspicious circumstances.

Probably because of his ministry and his mission. True peace doesn't arrive in the form of a treaty or an agreement, does it? It arrives when a person who has suffered with us, died, walks into the room and helps people imagine a different future and then walks alongside us towards that peaceful future.

God's idea of peace isn't a bit of paper signed by two leaders that stops us shooting guns at each other, is it? God's idea of peace is shalom. That's the Bible word for peace. That means a universal state of complete wholeness and harmony and fruitfulness that is founded on a unity between God, the creator, his creatures, and creation.

That's peace. And how does he bring that? Through a person. Do you remember what the angels sing at Jesus' birth?

[ 28 : 07 ] Luke chapter 2. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests. Do you remember what Simeon says when he meets Jesus in the flesh?

Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the sight of all nations, a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.

Simeon sees the prince of peace and the shalom of God fills his heart. And so even death is just a call to go home. It says, I can go now in peace. Peace. So peace consists not of the absence of

struggle or fear but in the presence of Jesus.

In the coming of Jesus the glory returns to the temple. In the death of Jesus peace is bought and paid for. In the resurrection of Jesus as we heard last week the temple is fully rebuilt.

And that guarantees peace and restoration for us all, doesn't it? Even as we look at the rubble and the ruin around us today and we ask, is this it? So if you're a Christian I encourage you to hold on to that hope in your hearts this week.

[ 29 : 32 ] And if you're not then make that hope your own if it isn't already before he returns to shape the world again. Let's pray.

I rest beneath the almighty shade my griefs expire my troubles cease. Thou Lord on whom my soul is stayed wilt keep me still in perfect peace.

Lord as we see rubble and ruin around us and we're tempted to ask is this it? Will you please remind us that you are with us?

Help us to live in the light of your presence. help us to trust your promises kept in Jesus that there will be peace and restoration and that everybody will see it.

We pray that in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.