

Haggai 2:1-9 and Ephesians 2:11-22

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[0 : 00] Now, we will read together in our Bibles a couple of sections. First of all, from Ephesians chapter 2.

So in the New Testament, Ephesians chapter 2, where we're going to hear of temple imagery being used in the New Testament. And then we're going to turn to Haggai chapter 2 and read the first nine verses.

So here in Ephesians 2, let's hear God's word. Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called uncircumcised by those who call themselves the circumcision, which is done in the body by human hands, remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one, and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations.

His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

[1 : 30] He came and preached peace to you who are far away and peace to those who are near. For through him, we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him, you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

In a sense, what we have there is a recognition that in God's purpose, the temple was always supposed to be a place of worship, not just for the Jews, but ultimately for the nations of the world.

And while the physical temple failed to do that, Jesus does. Now, Haggai chapter 2 in the Old Testament, towards the very end of the Old Testament, and we are going to read verses 1 to 9.

[2 : 49] 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. Speak to Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua, son of Josedach, 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 to you like nothing? 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. 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. 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, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord Almighty.

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.

[4 : 02] And in this place, I will grant peace, declares the Lord Almighty. This evening, we're thinking about the fact that in this prophecy, God's discouraged, disheartened people are being reminded that the best is yet to come.

To help us to do that, we need to step back in time. So I want to take you in your mind's eye to a building site in 520 BC.

Where is this building site? It's in Jerusalem. And what is it that's being built, or rather rebuilt? It's the temple where God would be worshipped.

As we saw last week, that project had restarted in 536 BC. The foundation had been laid, but then opposition came.

And so for 16 years, the building site has remained lifeless. Nothing has been happening. But now, the project has restarted again with full speed.

[5 : 14] So we're on this building site, and we're seeing a temple be constructed. But then, we also see some old men come by. It appears at how things are developing.

And as they watch the building restoration take place, we see them weeping as they watch. Because they're old enough to remember, in childhood, the glory days of Solomon's temple.

And they weep. And they say, it's not like it was in the old days. They ask themselves and others the question, where's the glory in this temple?

And they are discouraged. And that mood of discouragement spreads around the building site. And because the temple site is in the middle of the city, the city is beginning to feel that wave of discouragement.

Enter Haggai. He comes onto the building site. Was he wearing his hard hat? We don't know. But we definitely do know that he brings with him the Lord's message. And it's a message both of realism and hope.

[6 : 20] Yes, this temple, in a sense, is not and will not be as glorious as Solomon's. But future glory is coming. The best is yet to come.

Now, as we come back to 2020, we live in that reality, as we thought about from Zechariah's language of the day of small things, where perhaps our circumstances and our church, we don't feel very glorious.

We don't feel super significant. But we also stand in 2020 knowing that that promise through Haggai has been fulfilled. That the greater glory of the temple has come because Jesus has come.

And there's greater glory because now Jesus is constructing a living temple in the church, in people like us who have faith in the Lord Jesus.

And we too have the promise that for the church today, the best is yet to come. So we're going to think about that, the realism and the hope in Haggai chapter 2.

[7 : 30] So first of all, looking back, looking back at former glory, the first five verses is where we're going to be. Now, notice again, we're told when Haggai speaks.

It's the second year of King Darius on the 21st day of the seventh month. Now, I am going to presume that we are at best rusty on our Persian calendar dating system.

And we're also a bit hazy on how that would connect with a Jewish calendar. Because that's my position, I imagine. I'm not alone in that. This specific date, so the experts tell me, it comes during the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles.

Okay, so that date is important because it tells us that in the middle of a festival. What's the Feast of Tabernacles? Well, this was something that they did every year. Every year God said to them, live in tents for a week.

And it was to remind them of their time when they were in the wilderness before reaching the promised land. It was a time of anticipation, anticipating glory to come. And it's interesting that even when they were in the promised land, they still had to go into their tents, into their booths, and anticipate there was greater glory still to come.

[8 : 51] And that's going to be significant for the message. Now, everyone is gathered. We see Zerubbabel's there, Judah's there, the remnant are there. Leaders and people are together for this festival. And what does Haggai do?

Haggai, in verse 3, says, Now, parents, don't we teach our kids to do the exact opposite of this?

It's like, you don't say that kind of thing. You don't point out the flaws in someone else. You've got to keep quiet about that. But here, Haggai deliberately draws attention to it.

Why? You're thinking, if they're already feeling discouraged, surely when Haggai comes, this is going to discourage them further. But there's a point to what he's doing.

He's pointed to reality. He's saying, this is a time of lesser glory for God's people. If we just for a minute compare Haggai's day with the glory days of Solomon.

[9 : 58] You know, that's often described as the golden age, the reigns of King David and King Solomon. That was a time when they enjoyed freedom. But now they're ruled by Persia. And that was a time when their territory was large and they were at peace.

Now it's Jerusalem and a little bit around. And they're controlled by outside influences. Then they were regarded as great and glorious in that region.

They had established dominance over surrounding nations. But now they are small and weak and fragile. So this is a time of lesser glory.

And the temple that's being built is a reflection of that wider reality. But here's the thing. And here's where this isn't discouraging for the people.

Yes, their glory may have changed. It may have diminished. But God and his glory has not. And God, we're told in verse 4, keeps his promises.

[11 : 05] I am with you. Verse 5. This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my spirit remains among you.

So he keeps his promises. He's given them his presence. He is with them. There is a reminder that the same Redeemer God who brought them out of Egypt is the same God who is for them today.

And that's supposed to have an impact on how they feel and how they act on the building site. So knowing this, the people of God are to, verse 4, be strong.

Three times. Zerubbabel, be strong. Joshua, be strong. All you people of land. Makes me think of Joshua. I remember when Joshua takes over from Moses. And it's his job to lead the people in conquest, into battle, to take possession of the promised land.

And God frequently says to Joshua, be strong and courageous. And again, it's the same reason because God is with them. And God is working out his purposes. So they are to be strong.

[12 : 12] And, verse 4, they are to work. They are to keep on building this temple. Because this temple represents God being with them.

It represents a place of worship. So that they might worship God. It is a place where sacrifices can be made so that forgiveness and reconciliation and restoration might happen.

It's a place where the glory of God might be known. Where the reputation of God might spread through the nation and through the nations. So they are to be strong.

And they are to work. And, verse 5, they are not to fear. Because they are to trust in the God who is with them. So they're to look back.

They're looking back and seeing the former glory. But they are to take heart. To take heart because God remains with them. As Zechariah chapter 4 says, Isn't this something that we need to hear in our own setting today?

[13 : 20] Probably everybody has a sense of, when was the glory day of the church? Some of us, if we like church history, we might think back to the 16th century, to the Reformation.

Maybe, for older generations, we might think back to our childhood. People might look and think, well, the church before the wars, that was the sort of golden age in present.

Maybe we just think, life before COVID, the church felt like a golden age. Because at least we could be together. Today, I imagine for many of us, we feel weak.

As Christians, we feel disconnected. more isolated from our brothers and sisters. The church seems small. In our nation, it doesn't have the position of influence and respect that once it did.

Because God's name, God's word, God's glory, God's gospel, the Lord Jesus, don't have the same position that they used to. And we could be discouraged by that, but God would have us take heart.

[14 : 28] Because, God is, with his people. Jesus promised, I am with you always. Jesus sent the Spirit, so we wouldn't be alone, so we wouldn't be like orphans.

God still keeps his promises. God made a covenant promise, God has made a covenant with the church, in and through the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, given for us in sacrifice to remove our sins, to bring us to God.

And God will keep his promise to be God for us. Take heart, because God will receive glory. Take heart, because God is building his kingdom.

He is establishing a living temple. And as Jesus said, not even the gates of hell, not that the powers of the devil are powerless to resist that movement of God's grace.

So, so this is a call to work in our day of small things, at the small things that we are called to do. We're called to serve faithfully, to live for God in our families, to live as servants of God in our workplaces, whatever that looks like nowadays, to serve faithfully in the church, to come together where possible as the church, whether that's on Sundays or whether it's to pray or in community group, to love and encourage and build one another up and bear one another's burdens, to serve faithfully in worshipping on Sundays and all through the week.

[16 : 23] And we do that, not depending on our own strength, but just as Haggai said, depending on the God who is with us, God's presence and God's power. And as we do that, remember what we read in Ephesians 2.

Jesus, he is the true temple. He is the cornerstone that God has laid, that precious cornerstone on which the church is built.

The living temple is both built on Jesus, on his words, on his truth, and built by Jesus as he draws men and women and boys and girls to faith in himself.

And so we worship Jesus because he is our Emmanuel. He is God with us. He is the one who, in his body, the new covenant has been established and he sends the Spirit.

So these words from the Lord we see fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus. So yes, the church today may not seem glorious, but never forget, Jesus, our King, is glorious, always will be glorious and he is pursuing his glory in us, through us, in the world.

[17 : 40] So keep building. Keep building by sharing the gospel, making much of Jesus, using Advent, for example.

whether it's those videos, whether it's sharing devotional thoughts or reflections, whether it's just talking about the reason for Christmas, sharing the gospel both inside the church because we never want to move away from God and his grace.

We never want to take for granted what Jesus has done for us in his life, death and resurrection, but also sharing the gospel outside the walls of the church or the community of God's people.

And we keep building also in the sense that we want to support both local and global mission. One of the reasons that we, during lockdown and ongoing restrictions, have had missions speakers come to us month after month is so that we would be reminded that we have work to do in supporting global mission for the glory of God.

So there is former glory and there's reality but also hope. But then Haggai encourages a looking forward to see greater glory. Now, in Morningside, we have a sister church, a church plant by the name of Cornerstone.

[19 : 00] And their building project is nearly done. And that's good news. Last week, I was watching their promotional video.

And it was interesting to see how they did it. And in a sense, there's a pattern that we can probably detect that we see in Haggai. So one thing that the video did was sort of go to the old schoolhouse and say, here was this iconic building in its heyday, at the heart of the community.

See, lots of old pictures and you'd see there it is as the school and sort of heart of the community. And then now, in its present state, you see it as a building site.

And I guess, unless you know the plan and you know the trajectory, you might think, yikes, how can this be good? How can anything good come out of this or rubble and ruin and expose walls and all those kind of things?

And in a sense, the video goes on to respond to that because it keeps bringing us back to artists' impressions of the finished article. So you're constantly looking forward with hope for what it will become.

[20 : 12] And we can pray for Cornerstone as they look to share the gospel with people in the Morningside community, but also as they look to be a church planting centre where we can remember them.

But let's go back to Haggai on his building site. So he's looking back, yeah, it's not the same glorious Solomon's temple, but he's also looking forward. He's saying, there's something so glorious coming that it's going to make Solomon's temple look like a garden shed.

Now, how is that? Haggai's very careful to say it's not going to be because of your architectural skill. It's not going to be the gold and silver that you bring. It's not because of your hard work.

How is that? It's because God himself will act for his glory to give and to bring glory. Now, one word that helps us to think about this is the word shaking.

Verse 6, this is what the Lord Almighty says, in a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.

[21 : 15] I will shake all nations and what's desirable and nations will come and I will fill this house with glory. Now, the prophets of the Old Testament, many of them spoke of the day of the Lord.

a decisive day in history when God would intervene at the end of the age and that shaking is Haggai's way of talking about the day of the Lord and what he anticipates as God gives this message is of the world being turned right side up and that plays itself out because there is this picture of nations becoming worshippers and that is seen in them bringing their wealth to the temple but crucial to this shaking for our purposes is when God said in verse 7 I will fill this house with glory.

So the difference between Solomon's temple and Haggai's temple wasn't the size of the building, they were actually pretty similar archaeologists tell us and it wasn't so much the fact that Solomon's temple had loaded gold and silver and Haggai's didn't have so much the difference is that when Solomon dedicated his temple the glory cloud came down God's glory filled the temple so the priest had to get out because God was so glorious and he was present in his temple now that hadn't happened in Haggai's day but but then Haggai brings us wonderful news from God in verse 9 the glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house and in this place I will grant peace now how can that be and we need to recognise this didn't happen in Zerubbabel's day and it didn't happen in the rest of the Old Testament era we need to wait for fulfilment to the coming of Jesus that promise of greater glory is fulfilled in Jesus again John 1 the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen what we have seen his glory the glory of the one and only so here's this wonderful reality

Jesus the eternal son of God the full radiance of God's glory comes to the earth and Jesus is the Lord who then in his lifetime comes to his temple and actually one of the things that we see in the gospels and we see in his ministry is Jesus is making clear that he takes over from the temple if you want to enjoy the presence of God don't go to the temple come to me if you want to worship it's not in the temple you worship in spirit and truth and you worship through Jesus if you're looking for a sacrifice that reconciles you to God and brings you forgiveness don't go to the temple with an animal come to Jesus and his death on the cross Jesus takes over from the temple and Jesus has more glory than Solomon's temple and then we think about Matthew and the way Matthew's gospel talks about the death of Jesus and significantly he uses the language of shaking

Matthew 27 51 you can look it up at the death of Jesus two things happened the curtain of the temple was torn in two and the earth shook and the rocks split the curtain of the temple was interesting because one of the reasons Jesus judges the temple and the leaders over the temple is because God's house was meant to be a house for all nations but it had become restricted and closed just to the Jewish people and so the temple curtain torn in two was saying access to God is now open and it's open to anyone who will believe in the Lord Jesus so this shaking back to this shaking concept this shaking began what Haggai was looking forward to it began when Jesus died his redeeming work is a shaking it's God intervening in a decisive way now the way is open to God now Jesus the true temple makes it possible for people from all nations to come to him and that shaking that began at the cross will continue until the return of Jesus and when

[25 : 54] Jesus returns this promise will be truly fulfilled when Haggai says the glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house when Jesus returns his unimaginable glory will be revealed and all the people of God will get to enjoy his glory and to see his glory and to live in the new heaven and the new earth where we can enjoy his glory forever enjoy his presence forever verse 9 we will enjoy unbroken peace forever true well being to go back to verse 7 this shaking it brings in worshippers from the nations Jesus receives glory as the true temple but also as he builds this living temple to use Ephesians 2 languages he builds the church

Ephesians 2 Jesus in his body on the cross he makes peace between us and God and makes peace between different nations so that we can be all one in Christ Jesus he builds us into a holy temple in the Lord where does God dwell now Ephesians 2 says God dwells in his people in his church and so together we're enjoying greater glory we enjoy the presence of God with us and we look ahead to more still to come so Haggai does this wonderful thing in this beautiful building site sermon he takes them from small things to eternal glory he says yes your temple is less glorious but your God is not he says look forward because future glory is coming Jesus God's true temple is coming we know how that glory is seen and one day Jesus will rule over the new heaven and the new earth this whole new cosmos will be his temple where our king dwells and we will be with him so today in our small things we are called to work and we are called to worship and we're called to wait with expectation knowing that for us truly the best is also yet to come solution once to let's pack to mercy can see out next time