

Haggai 1:1-2

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[0 : 00] is taken from the book of Haggai, chapter 1, verses 1 through 2. This can be found in the Blue Bibles on page 791.

Again, the scripture text is Haggai 1, 1 through 2, on page 791 of the Blue Bibles. Please stand for the reading of God's word. In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai, the prophet to Zerubbabel, the son of Sheilthal, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord. This is the word of the Lord.

You may be seated. Good morning. Glad you're here. Glad that we're able to share these moments together in God's house.

Before I do that, join me in welcoming Mr. and Mrs. Alex French in the house. Thank you. Married a couple of weeks ago. Glad for them being here.

[1 : 25] Let me pray. Father, thank you for your goodness to us today. And the worship that has directed our hearts to you this morning.

Dear Lord, take our lives. May these simply not be words expressed in a congregation and a worship service.

But may that be the constant theme and expression of each of our hearts. Glorified in us is our prayer in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Today we begin a series, a short series in a short book. In the minor prophet section of the Old Testament, it was written by a little known prophet who has a strange name.

But don't let the obscurity of the book or the prophet cause us to dismiss the message that's there.

[2 : 35] It's a wonderful little book. And it has a very meaningful message for those of us who live in this day and in this time.

And so my prayer is that you would join me in thinking about James's word in James chapter 1 that we would receive with meekness the engrafted word, the word in planet, from Haggai, which is able to save our souls.

Two verses have been read in our hearing this morning. And they are enough to get us into the book. They also expose us to the reason that the prophet's ministry came in this post-exilic time in the life of God's people.

The verses really help us to see when it was that God's word. What time, what period in Old Testament history did this scene or these scenes, when did they take place?

Our text opens with references to a time and a person whose name was Darius. Darius. He's a king. And he lived at a particular time.

[4 : 07] We notice this was the second year of his rule. References earlier in the Old Testament really help us to identify exactly who this king was and when he actually ruled.

First biblical reference that we find to Darius is in Ezra chapter 4. Turn with me to Ezra chapter 4 and we'll get a bit acquainted with it as we look back in the historical section of the Old Testament.

Our passage is found in the prophetic section and the Old Testament historical books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. They give us a glimpse of the lives of God's people in post-exilic days.

The prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, these are the ones that God used to speak to those people who were positioned in that particular era in Old Testament history.

Ezra chapter 4 and we're turning to there. And you've beat me already. I am there with you.

[5 : 28] Listen, as a matter of fact, look at verses 4 and 5. Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and brought counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius, king of Persia.

Who was this Darius, also known as Darius the Great? He was an ancient Persian king who ruled from 522 BCE until 486.

He's not to be confused with Darius the Mede that we see in Daniel chapter 6. They're not the same persons.

Though he was not this Darius the Great or Darius the Persian king, though he was not in the royal line, eventually he found his way to ascend to the throne in Persia at the death of Cambyses who ruled before him.

And Cambyses himself was the son of the great or the greatest Persian king Cyrus the Great who ruled from 559 to 530.

[7 : 00] It was under the policies of this Cyrus that God's people were allowed to return to their homeland. 150 or so years even before this edict was issued by Cyrus the Great, the Isaiah the prophet prophesied that he would be the instrument in God's hands to release them back into the land, to restore Jerusalem, to restore the temple.

Don't have time to turn there, but you really should look at Isaiah chapter 44, verse 28 on into chapter 45, that gives the account of God speaking a century and a half or so before that one named Cyrus would be used by God to bless his people and to send them back into the land. The edict that allowed the Jewish exiles to return from Babylon was issued in 538 BC. As a matter of fact, if you're still in Ezra, turn over to Ezra chapter 1. And there are several passages before we turn back to Haggai that I want you to see that really help to set up the setting that is taking place in Haggai chapter 1.

Notice, here he is again in Ezra chapter 1, Cyrus. In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all the kingdom and also put it in writing. Thus says Cyrus the king of Persia, The Lord, the king of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

[9 : 00] Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel.

He is the God who is in Jerusalem. Verse 4, A royal order from the king that was the ruling king in ancient Near Eastern history at that time, Cyrus.

He had, in 539, he had conquered the Babylonians and assumed broad power in that era of the world. And here it is.

He's issuing an edict for to release God's people back into the land. An entourage, as you would read on in Ezra, an entourage of roughly 50,000 people went back from the Babylonian exile. They were granted resources for rebuilding God's house. Rebuilding was the primary motivation for the return. Take a look at chapter 3 in Ezra.

[10 : 26] And we see there, there was this altar that was built. Again, so this is, they're back in the land now. And on the one hand, they're positioning themselves in a proper way as far as a restoration of the worship of God.

They're building, they're an altar, they're begin daily offerings, you see, in verses 1 through 7. But the foundation of the house of the Lord was not yet laid, according to chapter 3 and verse 6. But as you proceed in chapter 3, as a matter of fact, take a look with me at chapter 3, verses 8 and following. In the second year after their coming, they're coming to the house of God in Jerusalem. In the second month, Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Yeshua, the son of Jehozadak, these are the same men that we see in Haggai, made a beginning.

Together with the rest of their kinsmen, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity, they appointed the Levites from 20 years old and upward to supervise the work of the house of the Lord.

[11 : 38] Yeshua and his sons and his brothers, so forth. And you see there, and look at verse 10. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests and their vestments came forward with trumpets and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals to praise the Lord according to the directions of David, king of Israel.

Good start. Things are getting back in place, so it seems. Offerings are being offered. They're laying the foundation of the temple of God, and it looks like restoration of worship.

It's on its way. Things, though, from that point began to happen. I can imagine, think about this scene. Their back's sort of at ground zero.

This was the place where some, nearly, almost 70 years before that, Nebuchadnezzar had come in and had wrecked and ransacked Jerusalem, took away people, took away the goods, the gold and the silver and all the things that were adorning the house of God.

People were slain. And here they are back. And they're laying the foundation again. Can you imagine the mixed emotions that may have been a part of that?

[13:03] Here they were. Back sort of at the scene. Oh, but God is in the process. He's about to restore them. Or so it seems. The foundation of the temple is laid.

The rebuilding plans are in play. And it would just be a matter of time before, once again, the Lord would be worshipped in a corporate kind of setting. Sacrifices would be made.

God would be honored and glorified. Didn't quite happen like that. Look at chapter 4. Enter opposition to the restoration of worship plan that we see there.

There's a momentum shift. The adversaries, you see them. And now when the adversaries, chapter 4, verse 1, of Judah and Benjamin, heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the Lord, the God of Israel, they wanted to join in.

But the wise leadership says, no, you don't have the same agenda that we do. Look in verse 3. But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of the father's houses, and Israel said to them, you have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God, but we alone will build to the Lord, the God of Israel, as Cyrus, the king of Persia, has commanded us.

[14:22] Look at verse 4. Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and bribe counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius, king of Persia.

Here's the idea. Foundation laid under the reign of Cyrus. Foundation, the building was put on hold for roughly 15 years.

And that's where we enter in, in Haggai, chapter 1. And you can turn back to that passage.

Just felt it was good to be able to get a background so we're just not entering in cold into the Haggai passage, trying to get a little bit of the biblical backstory in order to move forward.

They're back in the land for the purpose of rebuilding God's house, but the project had been on hold for 15 years and counting. And so that's the when at that time.

[15:33] And the time was roughly 520 B.C. by this time. During the period referred to in the first part of the verse, something happened. Did you notice back in Haggai?

On the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai, the prophet. There was a dispatch from heaven, if you will.

Israel, God's, Israel's covenant-keeping God, Yahweh, sent his word in this post-exilic setting where the building of the house of God had been put on hold, had been put on pause.

God's people, on the one hand, were in God's place in the land, but as far as them living under God's blessing and under his rule, that was not quite the situation.

And into the situation where there was this void of worship, this void of really looking to God in faith, God's word came. Life was happening, and we'll see that in much of the book here.

[16:44] We can assume that many good things at that time were in play. There was marrying and giving in marriage, childbearing and childrearing, work and play, earning a living.

These are good things. And then there was a word from God that pierced the pleasant sounds of everyday living. Ever have that happen to you, huh?

Life is going on, and then God speaks, and speaks to get our attention in order that we may hear a word from him.

Have you ever wished that you were just alone, could be alone and do your own thing without any interference, huh? You don't want any interference to your well-laid plans and your agenda.

You've got things really managed. You've got a one-year plan, or a two-year, or a three- or four- or five-year plan. And then God speaks into that situation, and he has a way of disrupting our world, huh?

[17:50] He reminds you that he, in fact, is in the Lord, and that he assigned you, and he assigned me up to serve him in his interest. There's a sense in which that happened for Shirley and me back in 1986 and 87.

I was just about to wrap up my time at Dallas Seminary. Shirley was doing well at Baylor Hospital, and we started to get a little comfortable there in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

There's a lot of Dallas Seminary graduates that have gotten held captive in Dallas-Fort Worth because they haven't been able to get out. And it seemed like we were about to succumb a little bit to that thing.

But then God began to put a little needles in the nest. My situation changed on my job. And Shirley, again, had worked her way up from an entry-level position, and she was managing several departments.

So we went to look out to one of those suburban places, and there were some nice homes in the suburbs. And we thought about maybe we need to purchase one of these nice homes in the suburbs.

[19 : 04] But one day I got a call from a man in Chicago, and he talked about God's work in Chicago in the inner city, west side of Chicago, where there are needy people.

Lord, I didn't exactly sign up for that. I mean, I was looking to go somewhere in one of those black suburbs, you know, and live and do ministry.

But my life is not my own. And guess what? Neither is yours your own. If you have come to Christ and are believing and trusting in Him, huh?

He reminds us that God's business in the world remains, in a sense, it's unfinished business. And when He calls us and taps us on the shoulder, there's no apologies for it.

Because after all, He's in charge. Five times we see that the Word of the Lord came from God into this post-exilic situation.

[20 : 17] God spoke His Word through His servant, huh? The text. Did you notice the second part in verse 1?

Huh? The Word of the Lord came, and you think it's going to say, by the mouth of Haggai the prophet. It doesn't say that, does it? It came by the hand of Haggai the prophet.

Huh? Huh? So what's He talking about there, huh? After all, the prophet, is He not the messenger, the mouthpiece of God? Huh? The Word of the Lord came by His hand.

The message could have been, simply could have been a written, handwritten message, or handwritten messages. On the other hand, a figure of speech may be in play here, which speaks about the part for the whole, huh?

That's probably what's going on. The reference to His hand is actually a reference to the whole of His person. God was using His servant in that day for His own purposes.

[21 : 23] Notice that the Word of God came to Haggai, but it came also to a couple of leaders there. Did you notice that? Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehoshadak, the high priest, huh?

Two men, actually on the same team, but it was the Word for God's leadership team in that day. And God was calling a play for His people.

They should have been running that play already, but they weren't. So God sent in what He wanted them to hear. Zerubbabel, one who was in the Davidic lineage, he was the governor or the civil leader, and then Joshua of the Levitical Aaronic line was the high priest.

Oh boy, there is a wonderful biblical theological beauty in this one verse because you have three offices mentioned.

You've got Haggai, the prophet. You've got the ruling office of the governor. And then you have the priestly mediatorial role, huh?

[22 : 43] All in one verse. And guess what, friends? If you know anything about biblical theology, you know that the Lord Jesus Christ is all three of those rolled into one, huh?

He is prophet, priest, and king. God spoke through him. He rules through him. He mediates the satisfaction for your sins and mine all in one.

The pathway for God's word in that day. From God's prophet to God's leaders. And like sheep, people need to be led.

They need to, leaders, in order to point the way. Leaders are those who get out in front of people. They are trailblazers. They are pace setters.

They are torch bearers. They are catalysts for change. And so when God sent his play for his people as far as what he wanted them to do, he sent it to his leaders initially.

[23 : 46] The leadership and care of God's people ultimately was in the charge of these men. The word of the Lord. The word from the Lord.

Look at verse 2. Thus says the Lord of hosts. Oh, what a marvelous designation for God. One of the great divine designations in Scripture for the God of heaven, the Lord of hosts.

Fourteen times we see that particular label or designation of God used in this book. And it is very meaningful that we hear it there.

It is one of the compounded names for God in the Scripture. First of all, of course, it is Yahweh, the Lord. This is the proper name of Israel's God.

Huh? It speaks of his eternal nature and his covenant keeping faithfulness. In the Old Testament, this proper name was coupled with another noun in order to call attention to certain aspects of the divine character or certain things that God did.

[24 : 59] And here the word is compounded with Sabaoth which means the host or armies. He is the commander in chief of all forces seen and unseen.

He is indeed the king of the universe. He is the lord of the ages, king of kings and lord of lords. He is the sovereign one and there is nothing outside of his control.

That is the God that is speaking in this book and we should see him in that vein. Huh? Here is a summary. When? Post-exilic time setting right about 520 BCE.

What? God spoke by whom? Haggai the prophet to whom the leaders who filled two critical offices in that day.

So what does the lord say to his people who are back in the land and doing what they can to get by back on their feet in the reestablishment of themselves?

[26 : 08] Does the lord encourage them and applaud their efforts at building their homes? Reestablishing patterns? Raising their families?

Now those are good things. He calls them in this setting to something that is even more critical than the everyday kind of engagements that you and I are engaged with everyday.

Huh? Not to diminish those things. They're valued. They are valuable but are they often to be viewed as the main thing?

There's something that was more foundational to their entire well-being and he reminds them of where their priorities needed to lie.

Huh? He reminds them about the unfinished business that his house needed to be built. It was the place of his presence. the place where he met with his people remained in disarray and in disrepair.

[27 : 11] Huh? The people say that the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.

Huh? The Lord and his people were not on the same page on that day. Huh? They did not share his sense of immediacy and urgency. Rebuilding God's house had been displaced by other interests and the rebuilding urgency had got them back to the land on the one hand but that urgency had not been sustained.

Huh? They were content with an unfinished house. Huh? I know we've got some home repair people.

You ever get started on the project and here you are X years later the walls are still not painted.

Huh? The windows are still not up.

Huh? It takes a little time sometimes to get a project done. This was an unfinished house. Huh?

What wasn't happening with their hands reflected what wasn't uppermost in their hearts.

[28 : 28] Huh? Our lifestyles and our priorities friends are reflection of what's going on on the inside. Huh? Just where were their heart longings?

What got them up in the morning and what kept them up at night? Huh? I love David's desire that we hear expressed in Psalm 27.

Huh? One thing I've desired of the Lord that will I seek after. That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

Are not the words of the psalmist in Psalm 84 sort of remind us of what was missing in this post exilic time?

The psalmist says how lovely is your dwelling place O Lord of hosts my soul longs it faints for the courts of the Lord my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God even the sparrow finds a home and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young at your altars O Lord of hosts my king and my God blessed are those who dwell in your house oh you remember we sing the song better is what one day in your house better is one day in your house thousands and thousands elsewhere what was the significance of God's house what was the problem with leaving things as they were what was so wrong with the house of God being in disrepair God's house was this

dwelling place in the midst of his people it was a place of worship a place of sacrifice and mediation it was there where

[30 : 42] God met with his people one reference puts it this way as it relates to Israel's temple it was not only the focus of the whole system of offerings and sacrifices priest and worship it was also the symbol of Israel's spiritual destiny and a visible reminder of the person power and presence of God now that the Davidic throne was gone it was especially important that the temple be built the continuing covenant people of God it was a cohesive element a cohesive force amongst God's people that and that day was being neglected the living of God's people is not maximized when their priorities are misplaced priorities have you noticed that misplaced priorities affect every other area of your life we'll see that in the book when the

Lord's priorities are not adequately represented in our own we stand to lose big time the unfinished business of rebuilding God's house impacted everything in that day when unfinished business is the order of the day the Lord has something to say and speak he did in that post exilic time he indicted the indifference of his people then and he does the same thing today while a physical structure doesn't have the same significance for us who are the dwelling of God today our priorities also can be misplaced and we when we find ourselves inordinately focused on good things at the expense of main things so my question for you today how's your vision how are your priorities what's your greatest longings are you seeking first

God's kingdom and his righteousness are we content with the status quo is there a common vision for the advance of God's rule in us and in the world is there a desire to make him known Jesus speaks in John I believe it is chapter 5 says search the scriptures for in them you think that you have eternal life and they are they that testify of me so we ask of this passage do we see in any way that this passage testifies to Christ I think so do you remember when his parents were in a very frantic search in Jerusalem and Luke chapter 2 when he was 12 think about this 12 year old kid is lost where do you find him

Jerusalem theme park Jerusalem shopping mall no he's at the temple in Jerusalem Jesus knew that the nearness of God was his good even at the age of 12 249 he said to them why were you looking for me did you not know that I must be in my father's house or about the things of my father it's another way of putting it the father's interests were the son's interests and such were the things that he prioritized I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day the night comes when no man can work may we hear our Lord's words even as we prepare to continue to hear his word from Haggai may they instruct us as to what our passionate longings for his glory and our good in the world might be today let me pray Lord we thank you this morning for this intro and pray Lord God that you would help us to examine as far as our longings our desires our passions for you and your work and your glory in this world teach us your ways is our prayer in Christ's name amen let's stand and sing our last song together Lord of Lord of creation

[36 : 17] Lord of creation God bless you.

God of the ages through times troubled years, you are the one in whom mystery glows.

They shall turn and fight your perfect warfare. You'll be in freedom, yet in your way.

God of redemption, you are the one in whom mystery glows.

God of the ages through times troubled years, you are the one in whom mystery glows.

[38 : 00] God of the ages through times troubled years, you are the one in whom mystery glows.

God of the ages through times troubled years, you are the one in whom mystery glows.

God of your people, your words still have spent. Look for us now as you've done in the past.

God with the kings of your triumphant king, challenging him in Jesus' strong way.

God of the ages through times obedient years, God of the ages through times obedient years, God

of the ages through times obedient years, God of the ages through times obedient years, God of

the ages through times obedient years, God of the ages through times obedient years, God of the

ages through times obedient years, ever faithful and true.

Sovereign Creator, Redeemer and Lord, now and forever your name be adored.

[39 : 43] Amen. God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

You may be seated. Amen.

God and His righteousness and all these things will be obedient. God and His righteousness and all these things will be obedient. God and His righteousness and all these things will truly be obedient.

God and His righteousness and all these things will truly truly obedient. God and His righteousness and all these things will truly obedient.

Thank you.

[41 : 29] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.