

Bible Study Of Haggai

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- [0 : 00] Ladies and gentlemen, what we're doing this afternoon is we're starting a series of three talks on the book of the prophet Haggai. Now, if I was to ask you to find Haggai, that would probably be all we would get done today.
- So I'll tell you where it is. It's page 831. It's the third book from the end of the Old Testament. So for those of you who want to go Malachi, Zechariah, Haggai, you can get at it that way.
- If you go back from the beginning of the New Testament, somebody found it in the...can you find it in the red book, anybody? There it is, page 762 in the red one.
- And 762 and 831 in the blue one. Can I ask you just to bow your heads and I will lead us in prayer.
- Father, as it was your purpose to speak to your people through the prophet Haggai when he spoke to them in Jerusalem, so by this written word will you by your Spirit speak to us just as you spoke through Haggai to others at another time.
- [1 : 45] We ask this because we believe it to be your purpose. And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.
- Then I'll read to you the first paragraph, which goes down to the end of verse 6, which talks about having holes in your pockets.
- 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 Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.
- Thus says the Lord of hosts, this people say, time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.
- Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet. Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruins?
- [3 : 00] Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, consider how you have fared.
- You have sown much and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough. You drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm.
- And he who earns wages, earns wages to put them in a bag with holes. Well, that's the passage that I want to look at, and it's the passage that begins this book of the prophet Haggai.
- Now, just to give you a little background, because this is one of the things I'd like to say to you. You may wonder why I chose Haggai, and I wondered too.
- But there is a reason, and I'd like just to share that reason with you. If you think about it in this way, by looking at 1 Timothy, or sort of 2 Timothy 3.15, it makes a peculiar and significant statement there.
- [4 : 24] Sorry, if you go back to 3.14. This is at page 199, New Testament section of the Blue Bibles, where it says, As for you, continue in what you have learned, and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it.

How from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, or in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is inspired by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Now, Paul is writing to Timothy, and we know that Timothy had, through his mother and his grandmother, been taught the scriptures. And the scriptures were very much a part of his life, and so a part of his way of thinking.

And what he had learned from the scriptures, Paul says, you are to continue in what you have learned, and have come to believe. And that's how we are to live.

[5 : 55] I think we are to live in relationship to the scriptures. From a childhood, you've been acquainted with the sacred writings. Most of you started learning them in Sunday school.

You've had them read to you. You've had them read at church. Over and over, the scriptures have washed over you. And you've heard some, and not heard some.

But there's been a familiarity. And out of that process of encounter with scripture, you have come into touch with God, and God has revealed himself to you in Jesus Christ.

So that you, that's the way it's done. It's by a mind which is disciplined, and trained by, and meditates on the scriptures, that we, in all the circumstances of our lives, confront the purposes of God.

And the purpose of God is our salvation. And that salvation becomes ours because the scriptures teach us to put our faith in Jesus Christ.

[7 : 06] You have, I think probably all of you, could tell a story whereby in a time of doubt, or of difficulty, or of indecision, you have turned to the scriptures.

And the scriptures have answered that situation by renewing your faith and trust in the God who has revealed himself to you in Christ.

That will have happened over and over again. So you get that pattern of how scripture works as a kind of lifetime habit. Well, then when in verse 16 it says, all scripture is inspired by God and profitable, you must say that that must include the prophet Haggai.

Because if he says all, he must mean all. Even such obscure passages as might be found in the books of the minor prophets.

And what happens, I think, is if you turn to Haggai and you start to dig, you soon come across the water. And that's what I propose we do in the three sessions that we have together on these Wednesdays between now and the 27th of January when Kathy Nichol will start her series of five talks.

[8 : 36] So back again to Haggai as part of all scripture that is given by God and is profitable. And looking again at that first paragraph in the passage which begins in the second year of Darius.

Now, you may be very much helped by the fact that you're at the end of the Mediterranean down here.

That's the Mediterranean with the seagulls over it and the waves under it like that. So that's... Then you have this configuration and Jerusalem is there and when they're talking about this then you can go way over here to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and way up into the north and way over to Babylon or it's the head of the empire and at the head of the empire is the man who is at that point king and he can be identified by his dates.

The date of this which they call in Haggai the second year of Darius. Darius is thought to have reigned from 521 BC on into the 400 somewhere.

So he reigned quite a long time. So the second year would be 520. So that's when this took place. And there's a lot of time signals in this passage so you can...

[10 : 16] in this book so you can recognize that the whole of this prophecy took place within a year. It's not like Ezekiel or Jeremiah who spent a lifetime at it.

The written prophecies of Haggai are all covered within a year. So you have... that's the background. This huge Persian empire which included the whole of this area also included a little space down here which was called Judah and which at this time in history, geographers tell us, had shrunk to an area of about 20 square miles.

I put a picture of Jerusalem over there on the wall and there wouldn't be much of Judah that would stand outside of that general area with the center Jerusalem and an area which had suffered a great deal from neglect and had just been in the last 15 years before this book opens, the exiles had come back from the exile in Babylon and had started to rebuild their land.

They'd been sent back by Cyrus under Nehemiah and Ezra which are earlier books in the Bible and they'd started to rebuild the land to resettle it after almost...

well it would be now 66 years of captivity in Babylon. So they're just beginning to come back and they're getting their houses built and they're getting their economy working and they're starting to work the fields and build their flocks and do these various kinds of things because everybody knows that society is based on establishing a viable economy and once you get the economy going then all the other answers come right behind it and that's what they were working on.

[12 : 12] So they were all building their farms and their houses and getting their grapevines going and their fig trees going and they were in a great flurry of industry doing all these things when along comes Haggai.

Now Haggai addresses himself to the problem in these words. He said, well you've done very well for yourselves. You've built nice houses but have you noticed in the center of our city lies a house in ruin and that house in ruin is the temple of the Lord.

And you have said, I mean your sense of the timing is that now is the time to build our houses, now is the time to get the economy going, now is the time to bring down inflation, now is the time to pay off the deficit, now is the time to build up our bank accounts, now is all this time.

And Haggai says to them, have you noticed one thing about this process that you're involved in? And then he goes to tell them, have you noticed that as you go about this, you have sown a great deal and your harvests aren't that big, you eat but you never have enough, you drink but you never have your fill, you clothe yourselves but no one is warm, and though you earn good wages, you put them into a bag with holes in it and it all runs away on you, it's gone before you know where it's gone.

And he said, this is the result of your economic planning. You know, you don't have enough to eat, you don't have enough to drink, you don't have enough to wear, you have the profound disease of consumerism.

[14 : 23] you need more and more and more to eat, to drink, to wear, you need more wages, more of this, more of that, more of the other thing, but it doesn't fill the gap, it doesn't do anything for you.

And that's what Haggai tells them, he said that consumer society, though you are, there is no way that you can get enough.

You're always hungry, you always want more to drink, you're always cold, and your money never goes far enough. That's the situation that you're in. You may feel that there's something slightly contemporary about that point of view, but it really is a kind of wonderful condemnation, isn't it?

And what Haggai is here to tell them is that the reason for this is that their priorities are all wrong.

In effect, a consumer society doesn't work, and ours is a consumer society. And we know, in a very real way, that there's not enough, you know, that there's not enough.

[15 : 44] I mean, Boxing Day is far more important in our society than Christmas Day, simply because that's the day all the sales come on, you know, and the endless appetite of consumers is to go and get and get and get and get and to amass more and more junk, to create more and more garbage, and never to be satisfied.

And that's exactly the picture that Haggai portrays in this first discourse as being the condition of the people in Jerusalem, the people who, having gone into exile, now are brought back.

Now, if you look at that community, and you might be interested to see how the community works a little bit, and this may give you some help with the names, you will know that in far off Babylon was the emperor Darius.

And one of the ways that he chose to rule was to get this colony down here, which was Judah, and was to get it in some way self-governing.

It was still part of one of the satraps or under one of the satraps of the Persian Empire, but they developed their own sort of local autonomy, and in their local autonomy they had three people that we know about.

[17 : 19] One of them went by the name of Zerub Babel, and he's a very important person as you may know, and if you don't know, let me ask you to look at Matthew chapter 1 and I hope it's verse 14.

And I'm just doing that from memory so I'm, sorry, I think it's 12. Matthew 1.12. You see what it says there? After, Matthew 1.12, after the deportation to Babylon, Jeconia was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerub Babel, Zerubbabel, and the father of Abiad, and Abiad the father of Eliakim.

So this man, Zerubbabel, is one of the direct ancestors, according to the genealogy in Matthew, of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is of the line of David.

That was, that was why he was, I suppose, the governor. He, Zerubbabel means that he's of the offspring of Babylon.

He carried back into the name which he'd acquired in the Babylonian empire. He was of the offspring of Babel, but in his blood was the blood of the royal line of David.

[18 : 52] And so he was the governor of this area, and if you look at him, you can see that he was the governor.

The second person that you come across is Joshua. You come across Joshua there? Joshua was the second man that was there, and Joshua was the high priest.

Now, Joshua appears a little bit later in the story, but he was the high priest, and he was the son of Jehozadak.

There it is in verse, the end of verse 1. To Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. So you have Zerubbabel, then you have Joshua bearing an ancient and honorable name, and he's the son of Jehozadak.

When earlier on in the record of the Old Testament, you find that Jehozadak was the high priest that went into captivity in Babylon.

[20 : 09] Babylon. So Joshua is the next generation who has come out of Babylon and out of captivity to carry on, according to the family descent, the office of high priest.

So you have Joshua, the governor, or Zerubbabel, the governor, Joshua, the high priest, priest. And then you have Haggai, the prophet.

Now, he wasn't the only prophet, as you can learn very quickly. One of the ways you can learn very quickly is to turn the page to page 832 and see the first verse of the book of Zechariah, which begins in a very similar way when it says in the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah.

So Haggai was one of the prophets, so that you had a prophet, a priest, and a governor or king under the emperor. And that was the way it was ruled.

There was a man who had military authority, a man who had spiritual authority, and a man who had the authority to speak from God.

[21 : 27] And of course, when you come to saying in the course of the Lord's Prayer, thy kingdom come, we have the supreme governor who is the Lord Jesus Christ, the high priest who is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the one who speaks for God who is the Lord Jesus Christ, that he has come as the fulfillment of prophet, priest, and king to rule in the kingdom which he establishes by faith in our hearts.

So that's the kingdom that is established into that kingdom. Haggai has the special opportunity of bringing the word of God and taking the circumstances of their day-to-day life to demonstrate what's gone wrong.

And what's gone wrong is that their priorities are all messed up, that they are so busy building their economy that they have neglected one thing which is central.

Now, the thing which is central, which lies in ruins, and it was ruined by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians who came and destroyed Jerusalem, burnt it, took away its treasure.

At the center was the temple. Now, the temple was the center of the city of Jerusalem and where you see the gold dome in the center of that picture over there, that's the great mosque which stands where it is believed this temple stood, the temple that had been ruined in 586, the temple whose ruins were obvious to Haggai and who was fellow citizens of Jerusalem, and the temple which Haggai urges them to start building.

[23 : 34] And so, the temple has always been in a sense central so that when you had the children of Israel traveling through the wilderness, they took with them the tent of meeting and this was the residence the God's tent in the midst of his people and often called the tabernacle and that's where the presence of God was and it was marked by, it marked the presence of God in the midst of the people and that was so all through the wanderings through the wilderness and it was so, it continued to be so until the time of King David.

You remember all the stories about moving the Ark of the Covenant around in the time of David because it had no permanent place and they took it out into battle and got defeated and it got captured and then it did great damage to the people who captured it and then they had to bring it back into their own country.

And finally, David said, here I live in a magnificent house and our God lives in a tent and I want to build a house for God and the Lord said to him, no, you're not going to do it but Solomon is going to do it and so Solomon was the one who moved Israel or Judah from living from the presence of God in the midst of them in a tent to building a great temple and that temple of Solomon which was built in the 8th century BC existed for almost 300 years until the Babylonians came along in 586 and tore it down and then they came back in this time which Ezra and Nehemiah when the captives came back from Babylon came back to Jerusalem they rebuilt the temple and Haggai's prophecy is that how can you expect God's blessing when the temple lies in ruin so get to work.

And if you just look at the end of the book so you can see how it was involved. Verse 18 of chapter 2 do you see where it says consider from this day forward from the 24th day of the ninth month since the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid is the seed yet in the barn do the vine and fig tree the pomegranate and the olive tree still yield nothing from this day on I will bless you.

From the day that the first stone is put upon another God's blessing starts to come back to his people as they reestablish their true priorities.

[26 : 36] something happens and they start to rebuild the temple. Well that temple which was rebuilt in the 6th century BC lasted on and on and on until the time came when King Herod the great builder came to Jerusalem and in 19 BC he built the huge temple that was the center really of the ministry of Jesus.

That was the temple to which Jesus went and that was the temple where Jesus argued and that was the temple where Jesus made a scourge and drove out the money changers. That was the great temple built by Herod and you can still see archaeological evidence of that temple in the area there.

There's no archaeological evidence or I don't think there's any really defined evidence of the Solomon's temple but there is evidence of Herod's temple in that area in Jerusalem.

So Herod built this great temple in 19 BC and then that temple became very important because when Jesus was on trial one of the charges brought against him was that he had said destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again.

And that was one of the false witnesses bore this because bore this witness or testimony to what Christ had said and the temple was so important in the life of the people and it was such a magnificent presence in the whole city of Jerusalem as the location still is because it's so central to everything that's happening.

[28 : 36] They were very incensed that Jesus said destroy this temple. And nevertheless Christ prophesied that it would be destroyed and in 70 AD it was flattened so that nobody is exactly sure where it was where it stood though it stood presumably very close to where that golden dome is over there.

And it was completely and utterly destroyed as Jesus very clearly taught that it would be. Well then you see you get into another problem when Stephen started preaching in Acts he said this temple God doesn't dwell in buildings made with hands.

And the story came the story comes out in all sorts of different ways that somehow it's not that kind of temple.

And the writings of Paul pick this up and talk about a temple and of Peter talk about a temple which is made of living stones of real people.

It's not a building made with hands of stone. It's a building made by God with human hearts or human lives.

[30 : 11] and that's the that becomes the basis of the New Testament temple the apostles and the prophets and Jesus Christ himself the cornerstone that there is a temple for the worship of God and the building up of that temple of the people of God living stones is the New Testament picture of the temple and that that temple and belonging that temple is to be the sort of centerpiece for the people of God that they are to build their lives around that temple and that temple becomes in Paul's writing the body of Christ and the whole thing turns to a the whole thing turns to a very profound picture of what Haggai saw when he prophesied and told them you're building houses for yourselves you're providing for yourselves but you're not providing for the presence of God in your midst you're all looking after yourselves and saying that the time is not right yet for the building of the temple go back if you will again to that part of verse 2 thus says the Lord of hosts this people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the

Lord you know how over and over again in the history of the people of God they haven't known what time it is you know they haven't known what time it is in terms of God's purpose time we all are very careful to mark that December 31st and January the 1st and the beginning of a new year and to try and put our books in order and our lives in order and our resolutions in order and so on and to try and see in that kind of systematic way but the thing that we need to know is God's time what time is it for him in our lives in our life together as a parish what time is it for us as a parish and do we know what time it is and part of the purpose that we have in preparing at some length for our vestry meeting later in this month is that in some way we will know for us as a parish

God will give us some awareness of what time it is for us and what it is we should be giving ourselves to and that's why Haggai's prophecy begins with the question is it a time for you to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruins thus says the Lord of hosts consider how you have fared and Haggai gives them this very kind of homely illustration of the fact that they have an endless appetite that is never satisfied and the reason that it's never satisfied is because they have neglected they have neglected to put first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and to allow these things to be added well that then is an introduction to

Haggai we'll go on next week and look at some more of his he gives three prophetic discourses this is the first of them that we've looked at today or we've begun to look at he gives these three prophetic discourses in the course of the two brief chapters of the book but you see how at least I think when Paul when Peter's when Paul says to Timothy all scripture is given by inspiration of God that if we can take the time to read and to listen and to hear what it's saying that you find that God can speak from the most remote if you want corner of the Old Testament and to speak with great contemporary relevance to bring a message to us that we need to hear I'd love to take a full page ad on

Boxing Day in the sun in the province and just put in those lines you have so much and harvested little you eat but you never have enough you drink but you never have your fill you clothe yourself but no one is warm you earn wages and put them in bags with holes one of the sort of interesting little tidbits with which I will leave you is that this was a Persian empire Darius was a Persian pharaoh or leader coins had been developed in Asia Minor and Persians had introduced them to the world so this is probably the first reference in the scriptures to putting coins in your pocket and finding there is a hole there and they go right through you can't hold on to it so that shows you that this has been a problem for about 2,500 years now thank you very much